

Design Resource

## Dolls of Jhabua

The Craft of Doll Making

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/dolls-jhabua>



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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/dolls-jhabua/introduction>

## Introduction

The craft of doll-making in Jhabua is very old and now enjoys a national fame. It is almost a heritage or 'parampara' as the locals like to call it and refer to it is 'adivasi gudi yashilp'. It truly represents the tribal men and women in colorful traditional dresses along with their paraphernalia. Facial expressions are painted onto them that live up their features. The dolls come in various shapes and sizes, in groups and pairs, in decorative casings or in open. These are given to the bride in her marriage in several parts of the country. Bhopal and Gwalior are other towns of the state that specialize in the craft.



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## Place

Jhabua is a predominantly tribal district located in the western part of Madhya Pradesh, bordering Gujarat, with its own collectorate and district court, police headquarters, bus stand and of course, the market. The urbanizing rurals live in harmony with the adivasis. It has a variety of handicraft products made indigenously using materials from the environment. The women make lovely ethnic items including bamboo products, dolls, bead-jewelry and other items that have for long decorated the living rooms all over the country. They are usually spotted wearing chunky, metallic tribal jewelry. The men have since ages adorned 'teer-kamthi', the bow and arrow, which has been their symbol of chivalry and self-defense. The vibrant colors and creativity of these crafts celebrate the joyous aspect of their lives, completely belying the hardships they face due to regularly poor harvest.



Greens, browns and blues, on the way to Jobat.



A hut on the way to Jobat.

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Colors against the raw brown background.



Flowers.

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Plantation by the roadside.



Bright colorful turban worn by an adivasi.



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A tribal lady wearing a beaded necklace.



A tribal lady wearing chunky silver jewelry.



The 'chulha' for cooking food.



Cowdung cakes being sun-dried for firing clay faces of the dolls.

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Women working at the doll making centre.



Women working at the doll making centre.

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## People

Ramesh Parmar and his wife Shanti Parmar have been making dolls for decades in Jhabua. They have been awarded certificates by several government organizations, at state level and national, for continuing the practice of this craft. Some of their family members also assist them in small tasks. This determined couple has also formed a 'sanstha' or group to empower local women and provide them with livelihood.

It is called 'Prashikshit Audyogik Kaamgaar Karigar Sehkari Sanstha'. The women are happy to come and work under a shelter and earn money for doing something as simple as filling cotton in tiny pieces of clothes or stitching them. About twenty women come to work at this centre and twenty work from their own homes in the village. So that makes it a total of forty! They work for eight hours daily at this centre. The young kids of the house obviously have enough action going on to be fascinated with, all the time.



Mr. Ramesh Parmar



Mrs. Shanti Bai Parmar

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Mr. Parmar showing his certificate.



Mrs. Parmar showing her certificate.



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Mr. Parmar's mother.



One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.

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One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



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One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



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One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



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One of the women who make dolls at this workshop.



Mr. Parmar's mother holding her grand-daughter.

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One of the kids in the house.



One of the kids in the house.



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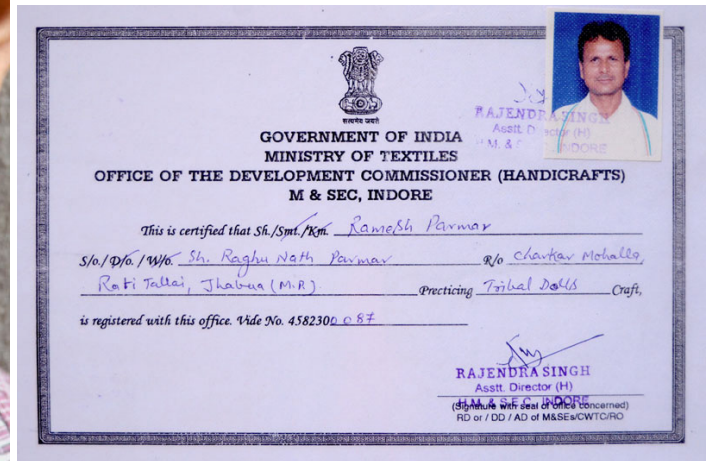
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Mr. and Mrs. Parmar's son.



The doll making women posing with their products.



Mr. Parmar's certificate.

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Mrs. Parmar's certificate.



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## Process

The process of making a doll is quite uncomplicated. Also, work is carried out efficiently by doing one task at the time. The basic raw material required is fabric (for making body parts and clothes), cotton (to stuff), metal wires (to make the skeleton of the legs) and clay (to make the face). All of these are locally available.

The first task is to draw legs, arms and torso of the doll on a piece of fabric. Then two layers of it are stitched together along the drawn lines to form the body parts. These are turned inside-out and cotton is filled into them till they are fully packed. Metal wires are used only in the legs for the doll to stand firmly on a wooden base. Once all the parts are ready, they are joined with a strong cotton thread. 'Pakkataanka' or double knots are made for the stitching to be long lasting. Then the stuffed body parts are made to wear clothes that are stitched well to their fitting. The face is made with clay and all the features are carved out in great detail. These are fired with locally available cowdung or 'upla' and then covered with a thin layer of cloth. Mr. Parmar, who undoubtedly has a very steady hand with the brush, paints facial expressions on this. Once the doll is all set to stand, the metal wire popping out from the lower end of the leg is put onto a wooden base. It is twisted and hammered from the back.

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Body parts of the dolls made by stitching two layers of fabric.



Metal pipes for making the legs of the dolls.

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Fabric being stuffed with cotton.



Fabric being stuffed with cotton.

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Fabric being stuffed with cotton.



Fabric being stuffed with cotton.



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The leg of the doll being poked into the torso.



The leg of the doll being poked into the torso.



The leg of the doll being poked into the torso.



The leg of the doll being poked into the torso.

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The arm of the doll being stitched into the torso.



The arm of the doll being stitched into the torso.

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The face of the doll being stitched into the torso.



The face of the doll being stitched into the torso.



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The face of the doll being stitched into the torso.



The doll being made to wear clothes.



The clothes of the doll being stitched to fit well.



The clothes of the doll being stitched to fit well.

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The clothes of the doll being stitched to fit well.



The doll's face is ready to be painted on.



Nails being polished with red.



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Expressions being painted on the face.



One of the feet being pushed into the metal wire.



The other foot being pushed into the metal wire.

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The doll is being made to stand on the wooden base.



The doll is being made to stand on the wooden base.



The metal wire being twisted from below.



The metal wire being hammered from below.



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## Products

Dolls of Jhabua are available in varying sizes and the larger ones are actually human size. Those are only made to order though. There isn't much demand for these dolls in the local market and most of what is produced is exported or sold in handicraft bazaars that these craftsmen travel to. The government authorities seem to be helping these local craftsmen in developing and preserving their tradition too.

Gudiya Ghar is how Shakti Emporium is locally known. It has the finest and perhaps only collection of dolls made by the tribals. These are slightly different from what the locals make, in terms of their dresses and accessories, and are more intricately detailed. Apart from dolls, the emporium also has a range of unbelievable bead ornaments, purses and the traditional teer-kamaans.



The doll pair made at this workshop.



Queen doll at the Gudiya Ghar.



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Dancing dolls at the Gudiya Ghar.



Radha Krishna dolls at the Gudiya Ghar.



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The doll (woman) made at this workshop.



The doll (man) made at this workshop.



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Expressions of the doll (woman) made at this workshop. Expressions of the doll (man) made at this workshop.

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Detailing of the doll's accessories (woman) made at this workshop. Feet of the doll (woman) made at this workshop.



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Feet of the doll (man) made at this workshop.



A set of tribal dolls at the Gudiya Ghar.

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## Contact Details

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