

Design Resource

Puppet Making - Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Part of Ceremonial Context

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and
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NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/puppet-making-ahmedabad-gujarat>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
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Introduction

Puppets are usually single handled with either string operated or wire controlled. It is a platform which transmits cultural values and ideas. It is also part of ceremonial context with a wide range of folk forms that include dance, storytelling and the masked performances. Artisan of the puppet making lives in Chandlodia of Ahmedabad district, in the Gujarat state of India. He also makes various types of art work like toran making, fabric toys etc.

With the epics from Mahabharata and the regular social issues are some of the topics taken to be highlighted in the puppet shows. They were mostly decorated with the contrasting colours to be highlighted in the dark when played with a black or lighter colour backgrounds. In Puppetry the puppets are either played by the rod, rope or stick for balancing.

Music or sounds are used for supporting the play, in some cases music of cymbals, a double reed wind instrument, cylindrical drum etc. are generally preferred as part of a story telling. It transmits cultural values and ideas through the puppetry functions undertaken as the formal education which generally happens through books, broadcasting networks etc.

The craftsmen at Ahmedabad makes the puppet by himself and plays them with the help of twines and threads. Craftsmen moves their own body in order to play the character of the show with full enthusiasm in the presence of the crowd watching the puppet show.



Artisan painting the facial features on the puppets face.

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Theme and style of the puppets are basically originated from Rajasthan.



Various types of puppets are made according to the characters in the play.

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The string operated wooden puppets are a form of folk art used to entertain public by storytelling through puppet shows depicting the stories from Indian epics.



Head of the puppet is made of wood and other parts of the body are stuffed.



Puppets are decorated with vivacious color ribbons and other accessories to make them look bright and attractive.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The following are the tools and raw materials required for the puppet making.

- **Cloth Pieces:** It is used to make the body parts of the puppets.
- **Stuffing Material:** It is used as a filling material in the puppet making.
- **Scissors:** It is used to cut the extra cloth length and threads.
- **Needle:** Big size needles are used in stitching the body parts.
- **Paint Brush:** Different sizes of brushes are generally preferred for puppet making.
- **Woolen Yarn:** It is used for stitching the cloth pieces.
- **Wood Piece:** The wooden piece of Gulmohar tree is generally preferred for the puppet making.
- **Ribbons:** Cloth ribbons are generally used in the making of puppet.
- **Premium Wood Polish:** It is used as the basic coating for the wooden surface.
- **Paints:** It is used to highlight the characters of the puppets.
- **Turpentine:** It is used to loosen the thick paints.
- **Knife:** It is used to carve out the characters on the wooden pieces.
- **File Tool:** It is used to file out the extra surfaces from the wood surface.
- **Twines:** It is used to tie the puppets for playing.

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Gulmohar tree's wood is used to make the puppet's face.



Scissors are used to cut the fabric and thread.



Needle is used stitch the costume and body for the puppet.



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Painting brush is used to paint the facial features of the puppet.



Fabric and color ribbons are used to decorate the puppet.



Enamel paints are used to paint the facial features of the puppet.



Cotton thread is used to stitch the costume of the puppet.

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Making Process

Puppets are usually carved and played such a way as it is used to communicate the ideas and needs of the societies through the puppet shows. Puppet shows would be generally done during the evenings, the off harvest seasons, the village festivals or the puja's where the entire village would gather together. It is usually played with the strings, jute ropes/ coir ropes and are often used in various plays at the streets, locations of play.

Artisan of Ahmedabad generally prefers the wood of Gulmohar to carve the different expressions of the characters of men and women. Generally the nose and the mouth are carved then the eyes part of the puppets are carved out. After which the head part is carved, then little part as neck is cut out and finishing is done with the sand paper if needed.

The premier wood polish is applied throughout the wood piece and left for drying completely, after which the wood piece is painted with different colors as per the characters of the play to be performed.

Hands of the Puppets:

Any cloth piece of cotton, polyester, silk etc. as per the need are taken, folded to the required lengths and cut to the required shapes. Cut pieces are placed on the ground then the filling material is placed as per the shapes to be obtained. The material is then stitched through and placed part by part on the painted wooden piece and stitched together to be fixed firmly. Matching cloth material that supports the character of the play are stitched to the puppet. The wooden and below portions are stitched with a cloth material as a belt piece and rounded with the fancy laces to enhance the look of the puppet.

Tying of the twines:

Each character of the play is tied with required lengths such a way, as per the dialogue or song/ music behind the characters that are enacted by lifting and lowering the puppets with their hand movements.

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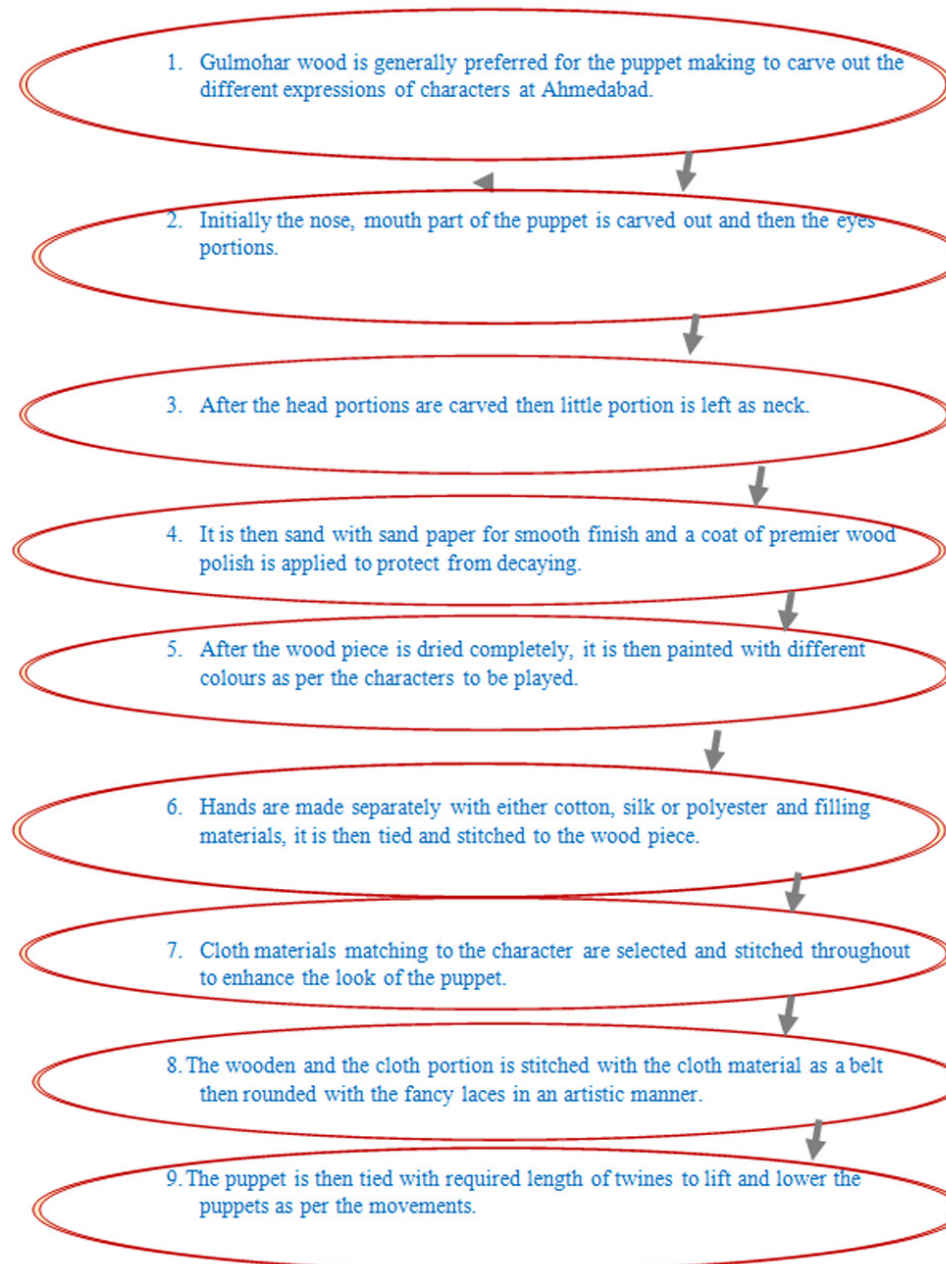
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Flow Chart of Making Process:



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Measurements markings are made on the wood.

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According to the measurements the wood is carved.



Basic carving of the face features are carved.



Details are added to the carving.



Excess part of the wood is scraped out leaving the surface smooth and even.

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Carved face of the puppet.



White is painted as a base paint and later light yellow color is painted.



Eyebrows are painted first.



Eyes are painted secondary.

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For male characters mustache and beard are painted.

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Hair is painted according to the type of character.



For female character nose ring and bindi is painted.



Painted wood pieces of the puppet's face.



Required size and length of the fabric is cut using scissors.

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Waste cotton and fabric pieces are stuffed inside the cut fabric.



Stuffed fabric is stitched in the form of hands for the puppet.



The stitched hands are attached to wooden piece of the puppet.



After stitching excess thread and fabric is cut using scissors.

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Upper part of puppet's body is completed.



Fabric shaped like a long skirt or pants are attached with the upper body.



The fabric is stitched from front and back for firm fitting.



Stitches are covered as well as the puppet is decorated with colorful ribbons.

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Finished products of the puppets depicting various characters for the puppet show.

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Products

Wooden cut pieces with various characters are made at different expressions to signify the play or drama taken as per the role to be played with various colours of paint on it. Mostly the hands are stitched with fabric and stuffing materials to enrich the character playing. Puppets with different items of the plays for the social and religious aspects are taken care of to highlight the in and around activities. Sizes varies from 2.5 inches to 20 inches with varying cost from about Rs.50 to Rs.150. In most of the cases puppets are made for the shows or given to the Handicraft Emporium.



Faces of a male and female puppet made of wood.

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Male puppet customized like a snake charmer.



A female puppet and a snake charmer puppet dressed in the traditional costume.

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Puppets costumed with traditional theme fabric.



A snake charmer puppet controlled with the strings playing the instrument.

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Puppets controlled to perform the action of horse riding.

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