



Reviving the traditional cloth toy craft of Haryana

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Haryana has a rich tradition of handicrafts. Traditional cloth toys are one of the most valuable handicrafts. The rural women of Haryana were expert in making variety of these toys. The most common toys were *gindu* (ball) *gudia* (doll), *jhoonjhana* (rattle), *saikal* (bicycle with a rider), *bail* (pair of bullocks, in *khadar* zone) or *oont* (a camel in *bagar* zone), *baandar- baandri* (pair of monkeys), *ghora* (horse rider), etc. This traditional art of making cloth toys is now extinct. The present study was an attempt to prove the potential of revival of traditional cloth toy crafts of Haryana. For this purpose the traditional stuffed toy bullock was modified to suit the needs and taste of potential contemporary users. The market potential of the modified toy bullock was got assessed by Indian as well as foreign people at trade fair, Delhi. The assessment was done on the basis of aesthetic appeal, utility, workmanship, uniqueness, colour combination, fabric and traditional value. The overall acceptability of modified toy bullock was found to be very good.

Keywords: Bullock toy, Cloth toys, Handmade toys, Haryanavi toys, Modified toy, Toy craft, Traditional toys

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Indian handicrafts are interesting in design and show high level of skills and workmanship. These handicrafts function beyond ornamentation and creative expression. Craft based industries are India's high export earners and are excellent in employment generation. In India, income from handicrafts provides the backbone of the economy for many communities. This economic factor greatly contributes to the continuation and the alteration of the character and the production of the same craft, *i.e.*, to make it market-friendly¹. Analysis shows that the artisans generally lack innovation and update market intelligence. Globalization demands innovative products, materials and processes with new standards of quality and creativity².

Innovative articles of contemporary use can be prepared based on the traditional craft and this aspect of value addition of traditional craft needs to be disseminated among rural women running traditional homebased craft enterprises. This will not only enhance their earning potential but also help in keeping various crafts traditions alive³.

Leisure time of rural women can be effectively utilized for different activities like tailoring, handicraft and cottage work for extra earning. Toys, dress making carpet making, cloth weaving, rope making are some of the examples of handicrafts and

cottage works by which the rural women can derive their income⁴.

The Indian subcontinent has had a tradition of making toys for 5,000 years, as evident from the relics of the Indus Valley Civilisation⁵⁻⁸. Toys play an important role in child's life as they not only give joy to the child but also promote his physical activity⁹, language and socio-emotional development¹⁰ and problem solving skills^{11,12}. These days children's screen time has increased causing a decrease in active play and play with toys¹³. Virtual games and toys are a cause of concern as they reinforce aggressive behaviour¹⁴.

In early times, children played with indigenous toys made by women at home which used to be eco-friendly, non-toxic and non-injurious to children. Over the ages, toys were largely made with clay, terracotta, cloth and wood, later on, paper and other materials were used^{15,16}. There were toys for indoor as well as outdoor activities, they were not merely playthings but also used for learning at an early age and to give practical experiences of day-to-day skills to children. These toys varied from colourful rattles, animals, birds, fruits, vegetables, dolls to balls, whistles, carts, cars, trains, phirkis, kites to puppets, utensils, musical instruments, spinning tops, marbles and rocking horses, even board games⁶.

The rural women of Haryana were expert in making variety of fabric which gave outlet to their creative energies. Fabric toys made by women were very colourful and attractive. Brides also brought these pieces of folk art with them to in-laws' place for younger family members. Toys which were generally made were *gindu* (ball) for her brother-in-law and *gudia* (doll) for her sister-in-law, *jhoonjhana* (rattle), *saikal* (bicycle with a rider), *bail* (pair of bullocks) or *oont* (a camel), *baandar- baandri* (pair of monkeys), *ghora* (horse rider) etc.¹⁵.

Handmade stuffed cloth toys are made in several states of India. Unlike the fancy and expensive toys sold in stores today, traditional Indian toys and games were simple and took their inspiration from nature⁸. Even now, in several parts of the country, hand-made dolls and idols are the central features of popular festivals. However, the industry of traditional hand-made toys seems to be dying; it needs to be revived⁶.

In view of the above discussion the present study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To explore the cloth toy craft of Haryana
2. To modify the selected toy for contemporary use
3. To assess the acceptability of modified toy

Methodology

Locale of study

The articles were collected from twenty different villages of nine districts (*i.e.*, Hisar, Bhiwani, Jind, Rohtak, Panipat, Mahendergarh, Gurgaon, Kurukshetra, Kaithal) of Haryana state.

Participants

Thirty rural women above 50 years of age, 30 experts in the field of 'Clothing and Textile' and 200 visitors at International Trade Fair (2007), Pragati Maidan, New Delhi were the participants in the study at different stages.

Tools

Interview schedule

The information was gathered using two interview schedules at different stages of the study. The interview schedules were used to gather following specific information:

Interview schedule 1- Preliminary information from rural women about traditional decorative articles with reference to fabric, colour, embellishment techniques and their cultural importance.

Interview schedule 2- Information related to the preferences and suggestions of experts regarding colour- combinations, fabrics and embellishment for modification.

Questionnaire and visitor's book

These two tools were developed with the help of a business management expert for assessing market potential of modified articles. The seven product features were aesthetic appeal, utility, workmanship, uniqueness, color- combination, fabric and traditional value. The product features were assessed using four quantum scale.

Rating	Weight age
Excellent	4
Very Good	3
Good	2
Poor	1

Statistical analysis

The articles were finally rated on the basis of their WMS as per the following scale-

WMS	Rating
3.26-4.00	Excellent
2.56-3.25	Very Good
1.76-2.50	Good
1.00-1.75	Poor

Procedure

Collection of traditional toy articles

Elderly rural women of Haryana were contacted personally using snowball technique. The purpose of the study was explained to them. By interviewing these women, an exhaustive list of traditional cloth toy articles was compiled. Preliminary information about these traditional cloth toy articles with reference to fabric, colour, embellishment techniques and their cultural importance was also gathered by further interviewing these women. Besides collecting the information, the cloth toy articles were also collected physically as per availability from households of acquaintance from different villages of Haryana state. These collected articles were documented through photographs for reference.

Taking expert preferences for suitability for modification

A small-scale exhibition was organized to exhibit these collected articles to the experts for taking their preferences on the basis of aesthetic appeal and feasibility of modification for contemporary use. Experts were asked to give their preferences for various toy articles in accordance with feasibility of

modification and possibility of acceptance. The most preferred toy article was selected for modification.

Modification of preferred toy article

Experts were consulted as to how to modify the selected toy article as per contemporary use and taste. Suggestions of experts regarding colour combinations, fabrics and embellishment for modification in selected article were also recorded.

The designing was done on the basis of experts' suggestions regarding colour combinations, fabrics and embellishment for modification. Thus, the selected article was given a new look to meet contemporary tastes in order to enhance its acceptability among masses.

Assessment of acceptability of modified toy

The modified toy article was displayed in the International Trade Fair, Delhi. The article was got assessed by Indian and foreign visitors as well as exporters and stall owners. The assessment was done for acceptability in terms of aesthetic appeal, utility, workmanship, uniqueness, color combination, fabric and traditional value in domestic as well as foreign market.

Results

On the basis of interviews of rural women, the following results were obtained:

As revealed in Table 1, *Gudia* (Doll), *Jhoonjhana* (Rattle), *Saikal* (Bicycle and rider), *Baandar- baandri*

(Pair of monkeys), *Ghora* (Horse & rider), *Oont* (Camel & rider), *Gindu* (Ball), *Bail* (Pair of bullocks) were the traditional cloth toy articles (Fig. 1).

Evidently, much time was invested in preparing the costumes of dolls and the riders. Almost all the parts of the toys were covered and finished with fabric. The joining and fixing of different parts were done with hand stitching for each toy. In addition to fabric, *machis* (matchboxes), *sarkanda* (reed stalk), *churiyan* (bangles), *anaaj* (cereal grains), *daal* (pulses), *kankar* (pebbles), *gatta* (cardboard), etc. were the other materials used very often in preparing these toys. Types and features of the traditional toys which were made by rural women of Haryana are presented in Table 1 and the plates.

Gudia (Doll)

Also called *Guddo*, it means a doll. Body and garments of these dolls were made up of fabric. The stand of the *gudia*, if made, was of wood or plastic bottle. Ray (2015) commented that unlike the dolls of today traditional Indian dolls were made from the simplest materials varying from straw, cloth and clay⁸.

Jhoonjhana (Rattle)

A rattle prepared using fabric covered *sarkanda* (reed stalk) as handle and four matchboxes containing some seeds for making sound. The matchboxes were

Table 1 — Types and features of toys

Name	User	Material	Embellishment
<i>Gudia</i> (Doll)	Girls	Fabric, wood/plastic bottle base	Some crocheted dolls
<i>Jhoonjhana</i> (Rattle)	Infants	Fabric, matchboxes, <i>sarkanda</i>	<i>Fundane</i> , <i>gotta</i> work
<i>Saikal</i> (Bicycle and rider)	Kids	Colourful fabric pieces, bangles, cardboard	<i>Gotta</i> work
<i>Baandar- baandri</i> (Pair of monkeys)	Kids	Colourful fabric pieces, cardboard	<i>Gotta</i> work
<i>Ghora</i> (Horse & rider)	Kids	Fabric	Colourful fabric pieces, threads, <i>gotta</i> work, <i>fundane</i>
<i>Oont</i> (Camel & rider)	Kids	Fabric	Colourful fabric pieces, threads, <i>gotta</i> work, <i>fundane</i>
<i>Gindu</i> (Ball)	Boys	Fabric	<i>Mandhana</i> work
<i>Bail</i> (Pair of bullocks)	Kids	Fabric	Colourful fabric pieces



Fig. 1 — Traditional toys of Haryana

also covered with colourful fabrics. Multicoloured pompoms and *gotta* (a narrow (1/4") shiny fabric stripe of silver or golden colour used for decoration) were used to make the toy attractive.

Saikal (Bicycle rider)

Prepared using *gatta* (cardboard), *sarkanda* (reed stalk), *churiyan* (glass bangles), plastic pipes, buttons etc. Two glass bangles covered with fabric were given the look of wheels. Fabric covered buttons were used for making light bulb and *ghanti* (bell). The rider was also made with fabric wearing *dhoti-kurta* (traditional Haryana outfit for men) and *pagari* (turban) and having a *thaila* (bag).

Baandar - baandri (Pair of monkeys)

Male and female monkey and a *madari* (a trainer who teaches tricks to monkey) having *damru* (a small drum of hour-glass shape) was made on a cardboard base covered with fabric. Female was distinguished by a frock or a skirt around her waist and male by a shirt. *Damru* was made with fabric covered buttons.

Ghora (Horse and rider) / Oont (Camel and rider)

Generally made with white fabric. Stuffing was done with cotton fibers. Body was made with rectangular/square piece of fabric and head and tail were attached. Sometimes tail's hair were made with real human hair. These were decorated with colourful fabric, threads and *gotta*.

Gindu (Ball)

The idea of balls made up of fabric was really amazing. These handmade balls also called *Gindi* were made by compressing fabric scraps tightly into a spherical form and then covering by hand knotted net of ropes/ strings to make it durable. This procedure was called *Mandhna*.

Bail (Pair of bullocks)

A stuffed toy ox could be distinguished from other animals by its hump. Body was made in the same manner as of other animals *i.e.*, body was made with white fabric and decorated with coloured fabric, *gotta* etc. Eyes and tail hair were made with black threads or human hair.

Table 2 depicts the preferences of the experts for suitability of handcrafted toy articles for recreation in modern times which were later selected for production of modified article as per their preferences.

Among the collected toy articles *bail* (bullocks) was preferred the most and selected for recreating in a

modified look with 56.7% responses. Next preferred articles were *gudia* (30.0%), *gindu* (26.6%), *jhoonjhana* (23.3%), *saikal* (23.3%), *baandar-baandari* (23.3%), *ghora* (23.3%) and *oont* (23.3%).

Traditionally used colours were recommended for toy bullocks by all the expert respondents (100.0%) to maintain the traditional look. Cotton fabric was preferred by majority for recreating the toy (Table 3).

The preferences of experts regarding embellishment to be used for selected article have been depicted in Table 4. For decoration of toy bullocks, bells (90.0%) and *ghungroo* (36.66%) were the most preferred accessories.

Figure 2 illustrates the toy bullock prepared by the researcher after following the experts' suggestions for

Table 2 — Preferences of experts for contemporary use of toy articles (N=30)

Articles	F	%
1. <i>Gudia</i>	9	30.0
2. <i>Jhoonjhna</i>	7	23.3
3. <i>Saikal</i>	7	23.3
4. <i>Baandar-baandari</i>	7	23.3
5. <i>Ghora</i>	7	23.3
6. <i>Oont</i>	7	23.3
7. <i>Gindu</i>	8	26.6
8. <i>Bail</i>	17	56.7

F- Frequency, Multiple responses

Table 3 — Preferences of experts regarding fabric and colour for *bail* (N=30)

Fabric	F	%
Thick	-	-
Med	12	40.0
Thin	-	-
Cotton	22	73.33
Blend	10	33.33
Synthetic	-	-
Colour		
Traditional	30	100.0
Any colour	-	-
Bright	-	-
Dull	-	-

F- Frequency, Multiple responses

Table 4 — Preferences of experts regarding embellishment for *Bail* (N=30)

Embellishment	F	%
Appliqué	-	-
<i>Gotta</i>	2	6.66
Embroidery	-	-
<i>Kingari</i>	2	6.66
Mirrors	-	-
Bells	27	90.0
Pompom	-	-
<i>Ghungroo</i>	11	36.66



Fig. 2 — Comparison of old and new-look traditional toy bullock

modification. The basic structure of its body was kept the same as traditional one. It was prepared with white cotton fabric while synthetic fabric pieces were used as stuffing. The new-look toy bullocks were prepared in traditional style but with improved workmanship and better details as follows –

- Bullocks' face was shaped better;
- Their eyes and muzzle were enhanced;
- Dewlap was added to the neck;
- Horns were added to their heads;
- *Naath* (nose-rope) was added to the nose;
- Hump was reshaped for a realistic look;
- Tail was made proportionate and tail-switch (hair) was added to it;
- *Athar* (bullock coat/cover) prepared in traditional colour and decoration; and
- A bell threaded in *moli* string was hung to its neck.

General information of the respondents who were contacted for final assessment of the products for social and market acceptability is shown in Table 5. The table makes it clear that male respondents (55%) were slightly higher in number as some females (45%) were hesitant in responding. Maximum number (50.5%) of respondents were from Delhi, followed by Haryana (20%), Punjab (20%) and abroad (16%). Remaining 11.5% included visitors from, Nagaland, U.P, Rajasthan, Bombay and Chandigarh as well as the Foreigners and an NRI.

Bullocks are symbols of countryside life. Therefore, as expected, their acceptance scores for traditional value were higher than for any other feature. Traditional value (WMS 3.78) and fabric (WMS 3.34) were assessed to be excellent while other parameters *i.e.*, colour combination (WMS 3.15), aesthetic appeal (WMS 3.09), workmanship (WMS 3.08), uniqueness (WMS 3.05) and utility (WMS 2.88) were judged to be very good (Table 6). Overall

Aspects		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	110	55.0
	Female	90	45.0
Place	Nagaland	1	0.5
	Haryana	40	20.0
	Chandigarh	1	0.5
	Punjab	40	20.0
	Uttar Pradesh	14	7.0
	Rajasthan	5	2.5
	Delhi	101	50.5
	Bombay	1	0.5
NRI	1	0.5	
Foreigners	32	16.0	

Features	Excellent	V. Good	Good	WMS
Aesthetic appeal	74	70	56	3.09
Utility	30	116	54	2.88
Workmanship	66	83	51	3.08
Uniqueness	50	110	40	3.05
Colour combination	72	86	42	3.15
Fabric	96	75	29	3.34
Traditional value	156	44	-	3.78
Overall Acceptability	-	-	-	3.19

WMS-Weighted Mean Score
 1-1.75 (Poor), 1.76-2.50 (Good), 2.56-3.25 (V. good),
 3.26-4.00 (Excellent)

acceptability was calculated as an average of WMS of all the features and was found to be very good with WMS 3.19.

Discussion

The traditional handicraft articles are an in-thing these days. The neighbouring states of Haryana are selling traditional handcrafted rag toys in shops and fairs. Jaipur is very well known for cloth dolls and toys which are generally dyed and stuffed with waste material. Even websites like e-bay are selling

Rajasthan's traditional handmade stuffed elephants and horses as 'Indian ethnic craft for home decoration'.

India is a diverse country having rich traditions and different cultures that have persisted overtime. Indian toys are the important cultural assets or the repositories of traditional wisdom, civilizational greatness, cultural heritage, creativity and imagination¹⁷. Toys are objects of joy in a child's world. Toys have been invaluable gift for children of every section, cast, religion and community and have been their companions¹⁸.

Today there is a need to promote the rural and indigenous craft industry and encourage buying eco-friendly locally manufactured products for day-to-day consumption – the indigenous toy industry must get a boost. In almost all states, traditional societies have a large number of toymakers. The craft can be sustained within villages, and people do not need to migrate⁶. Kondapalli village of Andhra Pradesh is a distinct example where artisans are using their traditional knowledge of wooden toy making to earn their living¹⁶. Consumers are attracted to traditional toys as they are a means to preserve the heritage, and the craftsmen and artisans depend upon the production for their livelihood^{19,20}.

The above presented study shows that the traditional cloth toys of Haryana also have the potential of becoming popular again if some efforts are made for the same. Toys can play an instrumental role in promoting the knowledge, culture and science of the country. India imports 80% of toys and the government is working towards promoting the indigenous toy industry for making the country self reliant in this sector²⁰. Recently, a national toy fair was also organized to promote indigenous toys²¹. Government of India has launched Toy Story as an inter-ministerial mission to promote toy manufacturing, innovation and entrepreneurship in toys in the country²². Such efforts are appreciable and some more efforts in this direction will certainly take the nation ahead in the direction of reviving traditional toys.

Conclusion

Traditional handcrafted toys are of great significance to India as they reflect the nation's rich cultural heritage. The present study shows that these toys have potential of acceptance in today's modern society and can be popularised with some

improvements and modifications. These toys are ecofriendly and provide livelihood to rural artisans. These 'Make in India' toys can also help to boost the rural economy which will also reduce the need to import toys. Moreover they have the potential to uplift the global recognition of India in the handcrafted toy industry.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

The researcher collected and analysed the data as well as prepared the manuscript.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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