

Puppet play

Playing with puppets is one of the favorite things to do by little girls. Puppets are made by older women in the family i.e. mothers, grandmothers or elder sisters for the young girls. The simple puppet making process is such: two sticks are taken one with 15 or 20 cm and another 8 or 10 cm. These two is than attached together in the form of cross with elongated vertical the short horizontal stick will be puppet's hands. Afterwards a coin or any round object is taken

and placed on the upper part of the stick to form puppets' head. The round object is covered by a piece of white cloth and than with a colorful threads a pattern is made on the face of the puppet by crisscrossing the colorful threads the image will be like two or three rhombus-like mosaic. Than with other pieces of fabric dress and headgear is made.



The puppets are gender distinct and the types of clothing made for them and the thread colors chosen to decorate the puppet's face are signifiers whether the puppet is a «man» or a «woman».

Young girls will make several puppets of different gender and sizes and can 'organize' a puppet family or a neighborhood. In their playtime they will decorate the puppets in varied form of accessories and will play a pretend-wedding game or some sort of social gathering.

Puppets outside the children's games also are significant in theatrical context. There are puppets of different type and size used in big stage theatres or in ordinary playtimes by children in the street. There are puppet's made and used for specific ceremonies for example *Ashaglon*, which is used in rain calling ritual.

The patterns woven on the puppet's face and its structure carry varied symbolic meanings. The rhombus shape patterns with colorful threads are primarily woven on the face of female puppets whether as male puppets will have a much simple pattern with one color. The form of making stick puppets in the shape of the cross is believed to signify the unity between man and women etc.

Historically it is known that handmade puppets had also other functional use rather just being an object for children to play. For example puppets were used amulets to ward off the family from an evil eye or other evil and demonic powers. It was believed that the puppets would take the evil powers and save the household.

There are puppets that are made from clay, which are called *ajuba*. The *ajubas* are made in shapes and forms of imaginary and fantastic





creatures. After the *ajuba* is designed from the clay it is first dried in the sun and then later fired in the oven. The fired *ajubas* are then decorated with colors. *Ajuba* puppets are used as household talismans to protect the family from evil spirits and evildoers.

Historically puppets played an important role in the development of the traditional puppet theatres. For different types of performances different puppets were made e.g. puppets moved by the

strings, puppets worn in hands or large puppets animated by a person wearing it a costume or stick puppets and paper puppets used in shadow performances etc.

The puppet making tradition and the use of puppets in cultural events is still current and there are puppet theatres functioning across the country, which produce and perform traditional plays or academic dramas through puppets for a young audience.

