

EXPLORING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MOHENJO-DARO FIGURINES AND GHORAY SHAH VOTIVE FIGURINES

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Received: September 10, 2024 Revised: October 20, 2024 Accepted: October 28, 2024 Published: November 14, 2024

ABSTRACT

In the South Asian culture, the children have diverse kinds of traditional toys like dolls, animal figurines, puppets etc. From the ancient to the modern era, the toys have been considered an integral part of children's learning and fun. In this region, most of the figurine toys were excavated in the city of Mohenjo-Daro. These were mostly like animal figurines, utensils, puzzle games, and carts etc. Stimulatingly, these types of clay toys are still sold near the shrines or Urs of the famous saints. Remarkably, the horse form toy is a very popular in Punjabi culture and called "Ghuggu Ghoray" in local language. The shrine of Hazrat Syed Bahaudin on the Sultanpura Road, Lahore is famous as Ghoray Shah on the basis of the saint's love for horses. Ghoray Shah (d. 1594) was a child saint of the fourteenth century. He loved horses hence the honorific "Ghoray (Horse) Shah" and devotees offered him toy horses in exchange for the fulfillment of their prayers. Through the centuries the devotees have been leaving horse figures at his tomb. These horse-shaped toys are made with clay; however, the elite class presented the toy in silver and gold as a votive statue to please the saint. Mohenjo-Daro animals' figurines are quite similar to Ghoray Shah votive figurines. The core objective of this research paper is to investigate the similarity of Mohenjodaro's artifact toy with Goray Shah Shrine artifact horse. A subsidiary aim of the study is to explore the role of terracotta toy artifacts in the Harappan Civilization. The researcher used ethnographic data and content analysis to identify and analyze the similarities between the two artefacts. The results of the study are expected to objectively document the revival of ancient traditions in modern times using the medium of toys as they unfold the social norms, values, and lifestyle of the region.

Keywords: Mohenjodaro Toys, Animal Figurines, Goray Shah, Votive Statue, Terracotta, Horse

INTRODUCTION

Toys have been common among children from all cultures and times. Toys provide pleasure and also play a vital role for the learning of children by boosting their psychological, mental and emotional growth. In South Asia, the culture of making dolls and toys is traced back to ancient times. These toys are usually close to real life. Excavation at

different places has enabled the discovery of handmade toys and figurines of humans and animals. These toys were usually made with stone, clay, wood and other natural materials. In South Asia, toys are also associated with religious rituals and festivals. These toys are considered a great source of traditional knowledge and generations¹.

¹Amar Taygi. Handi Craft of India. New Delhi: IBS Books, 2008), 43.

In South Asian culture, the mythological toys represent the culture and heritage of this region².

Most of the toys were excavated at UNESCO World heritage site of Mohenjo-Daro. These toys revealed the social norms, values and the living conditions in 2500 BCE. The Harappan Civilization was spread over an area of one million square kilometers. It covered the northwestern part of the Indo- Pakistan sub-continent from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea and from the present boundaries of Baluchistan with Iran and Afghanistan in the west to Rajasthan and Gulf of Cambay (Khambhat) in the east. It comprised the entire area of present day Pakistan plus a strip 150 kilometers wide running all along the eastern boundary of Pakistan. In the north, there were the highest mountain ranges in the world with picturesque mountain valleys, and in south the coastal plains on the Arabian Sea. In the west, there were rugged hills and desert plateaus and in east, the river valleys bordered by vast desert areas. The central region comprised of vast plains watered by the Indus and Hakra- Ghagger Rivers and their tributaries. These different topographical regions played a vital role in the development of this Civilization³.

Historical sites project the role of toys and animals figurines in this region. Most of the children of the South Asia grow up hearing the tales of animals either to frighten them into obedience or to instruct them on the improper use of power and the morals of right actions⁴. The common toys were the human and animal figurines, utensil sets, puzzle games, and cart for children at that time. The most common animal figurine was the bull. Bulls made out of terracotta often had movable necks. The bulls could also be attached to a cart, (figure.1.1) completing the entire bullock cart set. The continuous depiction of cattle in most of their art signifies the importance of

the horned animals in civilization⁵. Harappan Civilization people might have been worshipping various animals. Some of animals figurines might have been used as toys and others were used for religious purposes. In fact, three types of animals were found in the artifacts of Harappa such as mythical animals, semi human and semi bovine or complex animals

Figure 1.1



(with the head of one animal and the body is another); animal neither completely mythical nor completely actual -the strange unicorn; and real animals such as bison, tiger, elephant, buffalo, bull, rhinoceros and zebra. On the seals, humped bull was the only domestic animal which appeared on the artifacts; the rest being wild animals.

The human figurines excavated later in Mohenjo-Daro were reported as toys⁶. Diverse types of toys were found in Harappan sites. These were balls, rattles, whistles, gamesmen, toys-cages carts with

² Nanditha Karishna. Sacred Animals of India. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010),

³ Rafi U.Samad. Ancient Indus Civilization.(Karachi: Royal Book, 2000), 20.

⁴ Jonathan Mark Kenoyer. Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 114.

⁵ Shivam Pathania. Toys of Indus Valley Civilization. https://www.amarchitrakatha.com/history_details/toys-

[of-indus-valley-civilization/](https://www.amarchitrakatha.com/history_details/toys-of-indus-valley-civilization/) (Accessed on 5th October, 2023)

⁶ Dawn M. Hadley, Ellen Crawford, Gillian B. Shepherd and Sally Elizabeth, (Edits).The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Childhood. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 183.

moveable parts and animals on wheels. Figures of women, men, animals and birds were also recovered. Miniatures terracotta cooking vessels, beds and other forms of toys furniture were excavated. Clay marbles have been found in the courtyard of the houses. Many clay disc have been found in many sites of Harappa. It is possible that the children played a game piled up the disc of clay with ball like *pithu* game in South Asia. There were many different types of animals figurines found there and it is suggested that it is possible that some of them resembled with dogs. The dogs might have been kept as pet animal in Harappan Civilization. Interestingly some of the animal and even human figurines had comic appearance⁷. There were figurines of animals such as bulls, buffalos, monkeys and dogs. The use of these terracotta figurines is still indefinite. These toys were made of range of materials and most probably made of wood and other perishable materials and have clearly not survived⁸.

Figure.1.2 Shrine of Hazrat Syed Bahaudin



Stimulatingly, these types of terracotta toys are still sold near the shrines or Urs of the saints. Remarkably, the horse form toy is a very popular in Punjabi culture and called “Ghuggu Ghoray” in local language. The shrine of Hazrat Syed Bahaudin (figure.1.2) on the Sultanpura Road, Lahore is famous as Ghoray Shah on the basis of the saint’s love for horses. Ghoray Shah (d. 1594) was a child saint of the fourteenth century. He loved horses hence the honorific “Ghoray (Horse) Shah” and devotees offered him toy horses in exchange for the fulfillment of their prayers. Through the centuries the devotees have been leaving horse figures at his tomb. These horse-shaped toys are made with terracotta; however, the elite class presented the toy in silver and gold as a votive statue to please the saint. Mohenjo-Daro animals’ figurines are quite similar to Ghoray Shah votive figurines.

Figure.1.3 Hazrat Goray Shah real name was Syed Bhaudun Jhulun Shah.



Hazrat Goray Shah real name was Syed Bhaudun Jhulun Shah⁹. (figure.1.3) He was blessed “Wali” by birth. His descent belonged to Hazrat Syed Jalal Uddin Makhdum Jhaniyan¹⁰ Jahan Ghast. His father’s name was Syed Shah Muhammad¹¹. He

⁷ Upinder Singh. A history of Ancient and Medieval India: From the Stone Age to 12 Century. 2008), 174.

⁸ Dawn M. Hadley, Ellen Crawford, Gillian B. Shepherd and Sally Elizabeth, edit. The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Childhood. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 180.

⁹ Shrine Ghoray Shah Bukhari real name is Syed Jhulan Shah Bukhari. His forefather Saint Syed Usman came from Uch to Lahore. Due to Parkinson disease

the saint was called Jhulan Shah. His shrine was situated inside the Lahore fort. He was a known as Wali. He had great affection with his grandson Ghoray Shah. His successor was his son Syed Shah Muhamad. He named his son Syed Jhulun Shah. His real name was Bhauddin.

¹⁰ NA. Tazqara Oliya e- Hind. (Dehli: Qutab Khana Rasheediya Dehli, 1950), 161.

¹¹ Syed Muhammad Shah had five sons. His elder son name was Syed Emad ul Maalik, second one was Syed

used to live in Uch Sharif and later on migrated to Lahore¹². At the age of five he showed miracles. After seeing his son's virtue and wisdom at a small age. The saint's father made a prayer to Allah that this boy might interfere in HIS secrets, it is better that this boy dies and reach where he will be well kept. The prayer was answered positively. And at the tender **age of 10** Ghoray Shah died. He died on 10th of Rabi ul Awwal. The people, however, kept visiting his shrine and asked for blessing and love for many years. After the completion of their "Mannat", they offered supplication in the form of a clay horse. The researcher visited the shrine and talked to devotees about the clay toys in the shrine. The devotees informed that the Auqaf and Religious affairs Department has forbidden the offering of votive clay horse toys seven years ago. As it is considered the notion of Shariq or idol worshipping. However some devotees showed the examples of old horse votive toys. These toys have remarkable resemblance with Harappan animals figurines. The locals informed that the public came here with horse toys with numbers of their affordability ranges. There was a lot of rush outside of the shrine of the horse clay toys sellers. Nowadays, the situation is totally changed because of the ban on selling of the clay toys.

Figure 1.4 Harrapan Animal Figurine



Bhauddin Jhulun Shah, known as Goray Shah, third one was Syed Shah Alam, fourth one was Bhawan Shah and fifth one was Nurang Shah. All sons are pious and humble.

Figure 1.5 Votive Horse Statue



MATERIAL and Method

This study started from collecting, verifying, discussing and examining the data and information for the research. The researcher employed content analysis approach to analyze the data which included:

Review of existing literature as was available in books, research papers and journals.

Site visits for analysis of visual material such as the shrines, photographs and videos etc.

The researcher began with exploring the connotation of animal figurines in South Asian culture. The existing information helped to trace out the role of toys from ancient times to 14th century and reflected the spiritual importance of animal in the society. The site visits, interviews and discussion revealed the relevance and importance of artefacts. The analysis of existing information supported the research's objectives and highlighted the significance of the animals' figurines, toys as well as reflected the cultural and traditional norms of the time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher has accessed diverse sorts of literature to develop the structure of this study. The historical texts provided fascinating facts of figurines and their unique practice in the society.

¹² Alam Faqiri. Tazqara Oliya e- Lahore. (Lahore: Adara Pighame Quran, 2002), 305.

Symbolically, spiritual and mythological features of figurines influenced the norms of the society. It was really thought-provoking aspect that South Asian society had a rich culture of diverse types of toys and these toys were close to real life. The ancient history reflected the importance of crafts, figurines and toys were as significant as domestic items of daily use. The South Asian culture had diversity in its customs and beliefs, which was associated with personification of the animate and inanimate objects etc. Surprisingly these regional, social and cultural norms still exist in the society. The continuity of these mythological beliefs is still in practice. Evidence from the earliest period shows that animals had religious significance. Animals have spiritual importance in the culture of South Asia. Excavations have unearthed diverse type of animal's images. Many vedic hymns were also named after animals like "The Frogs", "The Cows", and The Bird" etc. Many animals communicated with humans in an Indian Popular literature Mahabharata. These animals appeared in human form and even as gods in the form of animals. Some animal's characters are scared, heroic and holy and some appear as evil and bad.

Figure 1.6 Animal Figurines by Harappan Civilization



Discussion

In Harappan Civilization there were basically two types of artifacts- the terracotta figurines and toys. The Terracotta figurines were mainly excavated in the Mohenjo-Daro. A large number of figurines have been discovered from various sites. These

figures are usually made of terracotta and faience. However, in the Harappan religion, just like many other ancient religions, they must have been used for different purposes. The representation of a particular animal may be indicated as the symbol of a particular clan. These are indicated for diverse purposes; they were specifically trained for animal fights arranged for public entertainment. A number of different types of animal figurines were probably meant to be toys for children¹³ (figure.1.6).

Figure.1.7 Small Horse Toys



Many art forms are the result of deep spiritual emotions and associations. Hazrat Syed Makhdum Bhaauddin aka Goray Shah's Shrine is situated at the opposite side at the back alley of the University of Engineering and Technology Lahore. He was born in a very religious family; his father was a Sufi and famous for his philanthropic work in the community.

Bahauddin was only five when his Vilayet and piousness got the limelight. His small words and actions were way ahead of his age. At that age he was fond of small horse toys (figure.1.7).

During the researcher's visits to the shrine of Hazrat Syed Makhdum Bhaauddin Goray Shah, she came across three different stories relating to the horse votive statue. The Qari said that the saint Shah Makhdum had a great passion for horses. He loved them. A particular story states that his friends once held a challenge that whose horse could run

¹³Rafi U. Samad. Ancient Indus Civilization. Karachi: Royal Book, 2000), 127.

the fastest would be claimed the winner. The saint did not have a horse, so he just sat on the clay wall. He then ordered the clay wall to run, which it did and won the race. People were left in awe after seeing this miracle. From that day onwards, they started to call the saint Goray Shah. In order to please the saint, they offered him clay horses.

Another popular story was that a craftsman used to make terracotta pots and toys. He made a horse toy for the saint, Shah Sahab got cheerful and sat on the horse. He then started chanting, "*Chal mere Ghoray. Chal mere ghoray*". By the grace of Allah Almighty, the horse started to run and came back after taking a round of the entire city. After this, his name changed from Bahauddin to Ghoray Shah.

A devotee narrated another interesting story that once a horse got stuck near the shrine and was unable to move forward. A Kochwan came to the saint and asked him to pray. Hazrat Syed Makhdum Bhaauddin prayed and thus horse was able to run and cross the shrine. After this incident the whole area was called Ghora Shah Chowk.

The name of the saint was Hazrat Syed Makhdum Bhaauddin Sohorwardi Bukhari. He was a born a 'Wali' and he performed miracles from the age of five. He was so fond of horses that if a person presented a toy horse to him, all his wishes were fulfilled. His father Syed Shah Muhammad scolded Bahauddin and told him that if he did not stop granting people's wishes, he would wish death upon him. The heart-broken father then sought Allah's forgiveness and buried his child at the same spot where he died later that year. People still leave toy horses for Jhoolan Shah, the Child Saint of Lahore¹⁴.

In South Asian Culture the horse is considered a symbol of nobility and power. The honour of riding a horse belonged to kings and warriors and considered a symbol of royalty and power, and it became a votive offerings in many parts of South Asian regions¹⁵. The most controversial among the animals known to the Harappans is the horse, for once it is admitted that Harappans knew the horse. A terracotta horse figurine was excavated at

Rangpur had a mane indicated by an indented line over the neck. The examination of the animals' bones from Rangpur by Bolanath revealed that a domesticated variety of the ass was also known to the Harappans. It may be added that a wild variety of horse, namely, the *onigar*, still exists in Kuch¹⁶. Votive offerings of terracotta horses' tradition is still popular in some regions of South Asia. In southern India, the images of horses are presented to gods as sacred offerings. Hundreds of horses shaped out of clay or cement can be found at temples in rural Tamil Nadu. The people who made these majestic statues may travel on foot, but the gods will ride. When Tamil potters make a large terracotta horse, they start with a handful of earth from the floor of a shrine, then build the figure and fire it there. Today, temple horses are also made out of plaster or cement¹⁷. Animal Figurines are considered sacred and have a symbolic representation of different deities.

Conclusion

The study attempted to identify the significant role of toys in the learning of children. History itself proves that the presence of toys and figurines reflect the social and cultural norms of society. The depiction of a specific animal may be shown in the symbol of a particular clan. These are indicated in diverse purposes as these were specially trained for animal fights arranged for the public entertainment. A number of different types of animal figurines were probably meant to be toys for the children. This study reveals the affection that South Asian people have for animals from ancient times to the present era. Animals have been very popular in literature, poetry, art, and folklore, and they even have a spiritual connection with saints. Animal toys and figurines were not merely intended to serve as toys; they hold symbolic significance, serving to teach and tell stories in order to educate children. Many toys are considered art forms that result from deep spiritual emotions and associations

¹⁴ <https://aliusmanbaig.blogspot.com/2018/10/ghore-shah.html> (Accessed on 6th October 2023)

¹⁵ Nanditha Krishna, *Scared Animals of India*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010), 154.

¹⁶ Choodamani Nandagopal. *Arts and Crafts of Indus Civilization*. Delhi: Aryans Books International, 2006), 79.

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