

Design Resource

## Carving of Stone Pillars

The Art of Stone Pillar Carving

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Manmi Dutta

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/carving-stone-pillars>



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## Introduction

The architecture of India has relied mainly on stones from centuries. Stone carving has remained a major craft from eras. Numerous Temples, forts and palaces of ancient Indian civilization have been carved out from locally available stones. Archaeological survey of India has revealed intricately carved statuettes and carvings made on stone ages ago. Few of the ancient rock carved wonders are Khajuraho Temple, Elephanta Caves, Konark Temple, Sanchi Stupa etc. Carving stones into sculpture and pillars is an activity older than civilization itself. The stone carving tradition of India is considered as one of the richest in the world. From the 7th century B.C stone carvers have existed in India. Stone carvers are generally established in the places where the stones are in abundance, reasons behind this were that stones are huge and heavy in size, so the cost of transportation to distant places becomes too expensive making it economically futile.

The stone carving tradition has been carried forward as a family lore from generations to the present day. Stone carvers have a remarkable scope in the areas of architectural elements, interiors and exteriors of houses including the furniture's and equipment's. It is an activity where rough natural stones pieces are shaped by skilfully by the removal of unwanted stone pieces. The sculptural process extremely depends on the quality of the material. These crafts are intricately designed and crafted from a single stone, combined with expertise, patience and perseverance. These artisans create works of splendour, which have few parallels in the world. States such as Orissa, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are actively engaged on works related to marble, graphite and sandstone.

Nowadays the government has set up many agencies and design centres to encourage craft families to continue making handicrafts and also help them to market their ware. Stone craft in India is not only restricted to ornate carvings on temples or sculptures of deities, but it is also used in creating items like pillars, carved panels, tiles, paper weight, models of historical building, sculptures of Human and animals etc. Stone carvers usually prefer to work on soft stone, as these are easy to carve using simple tools and the stones are also comparatively cheaper. The basic design is traced on the stone and it is given a crude shape. The final carving is then carried out and items are further developed into the desirable structure. Various Crafts men have been honoured with National & State level awards for the excellence in this art and production of craft items high in artistic value.

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Decorative pillars carved out for household furnishing.

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Ganesha idol carved with an embossing effect.



Intricately carved out portrait of Lord Buddha.

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The pillar is carved and shaped with the help of Diamond blade electric cutter.



An unfinished idol of a Lord Vishnu.

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Head of an elephant carved out of stone used for decorative purpose.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials used for the Carving of Stone Pillars:

- **Stone:** Blocks of stone especially the Koira stone is used to carve out the intended designs or shapes.
- **Chisels:** Various Chisels are used for shaping and roughing the stone.
- **Measuring Tape:** Measuring tape is used for taking all the required measurements needed for the carving.
- **Electric Grinder:** Electric Grinder helps in grinding out the rough surface into a smooth finish.
- **Diamond Blade Electric Cutter:** Electric cutter helps in cutting out the unwanted stone parts from the block of stone.
- **Scissors:** Scissors helps in cutting out the stencil.
- **Stencils:** Cut out design parts used for outlines and drawings.
- **Adhesive:** Adhesives are used in filling of the few parts which separates from the structure.
- **Square Head Hammer:** Hammers are used for hammering out the unwanted parts of the stone and forming the intended design.
- **L shaped Scales:** It helps the sculptor to draw straight lines along the right angles.
- **Red oxide solution/Pencils:** Both help in outlining the patterns or stencils on the stone for carving.

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Diamond Blade Electric cutter is used for designing and carving out the stone into a form.



Adhesives are used to join separated parts together.



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Hammer and different types of chisels are used to carve out the stone.



Square head hammer is used along with chisel to hammer out the unwanted parts.

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Different sizes of Diamond blades are used for carving.



Red oxide solution is used to mark the design on the stone.

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Koira stone is the stone used for carving the desired shape.



Stencils are used for reference of the design to be marked or traced on the stone.

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L shaped scales are used to draw lines along the right angles.

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## Making Process

Columns and pillars are very good option for construction as well as decoration; it can be used for exterior and interior. Stone Column consists of three parts; capital, shaft and base. The surface can be plain, groves; spired or very detailed carved. The available materials for stone column are marble, travertine, limestone, sandstone and soft stone. From breaking of large slabs of stone into smaller pieces, to reshaping and sculpting fine details, each and every process is prepared by hand, with the help of hammers and chisels of various shapes and sizes.

Huge blocks of stones are mainly shipped in Lorries from Devanahalli and Gopalapura, Bengaluru. The carvers of this region mostly work on the Koira stone which is more comfortable for carving as they can be found in sizes and shapes ranging between 10 feet to 60 feet. The raw stone block is firstly cut into desired size and thickness by the use of electric grinder and chisel. The main importance is on getting the size up to approximately 8 feet tall so as to make the product expensive. The carver usually begins by knocking off large portions of unwanted stones. The sides of the stones are made uniform by removing the roughness and cutting it down to the required shape. The shaped object is then further kept for deeper carvings. The artisans outline the diagram or the intended designs using stencils with red oxide or pencils on the surface of the stone for the process of initial carving.

Chisels and hammers are used to carve out intricate design by hands, any smallest miscalculation can damage the whole shape. The carver places the point of the chisel against a selected part of the stone so as to remove the unwanted parts (which are marked by pencils or chalks) evenly when the hammer is strike on the end of the tool accurately. The artisans make their own judgement for using the right size of instrument which influences the quality of the object. The intended design is roughed out with the help of chisels, electric grinder and hammer. Once the general shape of the object is determined the sculptor again refines the whole object by using various smoothing tools to get the perfect output. To impart a better finish and shining sand paper is used for polishing .Eventually the rough block of stone is sculpted into a finished object.

Craft of every other field has an influence from their local essence which is either developed in the past or with the changes in time and design improvements during the period. This influence conveys a story and an artistic appeal behind it; moreover the people are able to relate to that culture. If craft artisans develop a certain style of story interpretation then it will make a rich and positive impact on the productions. Craftsmen can gain valuable insight about product, design, demand, good pricing through personal relationship with the buyers over time. The artistic appeal helps in increasing long term trade relationships, reassures repeat business from which artisans can utilize the consistent income to invest in and grow ones business.

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A block of Koira stone is roughed out into a required length.



A string of yarn is dipped in red oxide solution which is used for marking the design.

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Craftsmen uses hammer along with chisel carves the marked areas on the stone.



The unwanted parts of stone are hammered and removed.

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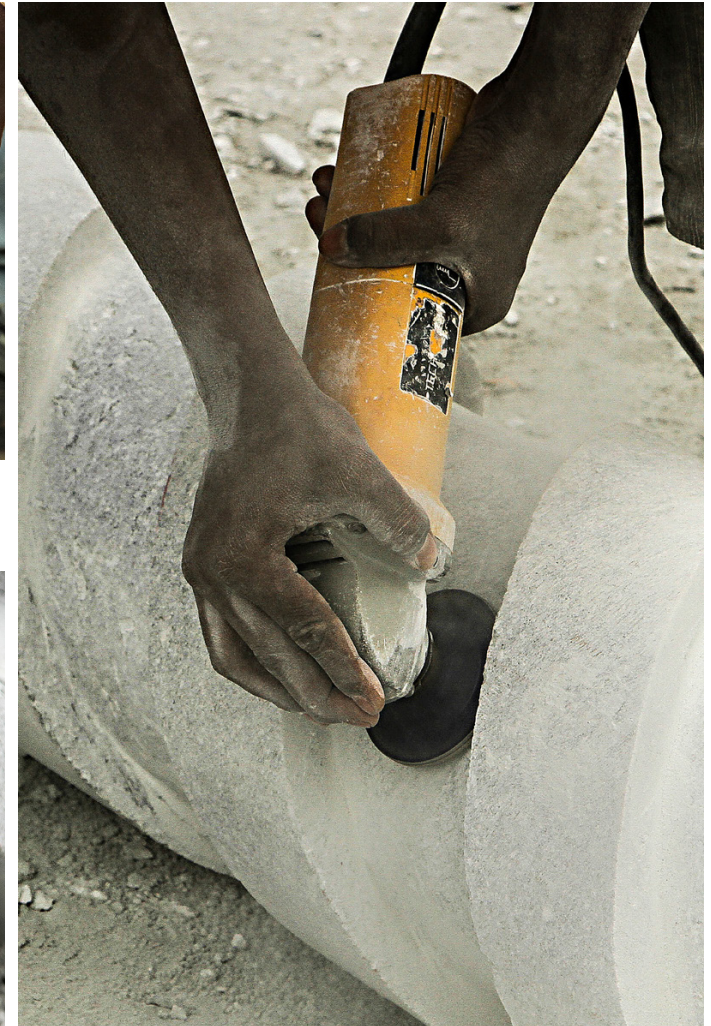
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Electric cutter is used to cut the edges of the design.



Electric Buffer is used to smoothen the rough edges created on the stone.



Adhesive is applied to join the breakages.

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Customized pillar kept for buffering.

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Required measurements are marked for the design.



Stencil is used to trace the design for carving.



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Design is traced using red oxide solution.



Designs are carved out using small size diamond blade electric cutter.



Carving of Lord Ganesha in process.

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## Products

Basically the products are prepared according to the orders given by the purchasers. Although there are few products which are common yet differently carved and kept for local buyers.

### **Bulk Orders:**

Much larger quantities of pieces are prepared for the purchase. Designs are directed and sampled by the purchaser or customers. Products like Pillars, steps, Tulsi Pot, Decorative stands and many more.

### **Custom Made:**

Single Piece of object is created with a particular design pattern ordered by the customer. By completing the customized design these products are sold and appreciated. Decorative products like, customized pillars, Lanterns, Stone Water Fountain, Water trough.

### **Common Products:**

#### **Pillars:**

Customized pillars can also be architectural as well as decorative for household furnishing.

#### **Water Fountain:**

Water fountains are intricately carved as per available design also in customized design for outdoors and indoors.

#### **Deity:**

Full body deity or portrait are created as decorative household products.

#### **Human Decorative Figures:**

Exquisitely human figures with different postures are prepared for decorative purposes.

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Decorative carved out Sculpture of Nandi.

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Outdoor stone décor depicting a peacock.

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Miniature of a temple intricately carved.



Portrait carving of Lord Buddha.



Modern art carved out of stone portraying Lord Ganesha.

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Variety of pillars and decorative columns carved out of stone.

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