

Design Resource

## Shivarapatna Stone Crafts II

The Craft of Stone Carved Sculptures and Idols

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/shivarapatna-stone-crafts-ii>



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## Introduction

The Village Shivarapatna is very well known for its intricate carvings on black and grey granite to make idols for temples. The Shivarapatna craft is popular all over India and abroad. There are myths that “During the period of Ganga Dynasty a ‘shilpi’ (Craftsperson) named Basulinga Acharya was traveling from a place which were near Karnataka and Tamil Nadu border in then India to some other place and he spent a night in a Dharmashala in the village Shivarapatna. After cooking the food in the night, he took some pieces of charcoal and drawn an idol on the wall, which was very beautiful. Next morning few villagers saw the line drawing and got surprised by the skill of him. This news spread like wild fire in the village and the king got to know about this. He came to the village to meet him and asked him to stay in the village and practice the craft and offered him land in the village to stay. There onwards the craft flourished in the village.

The Ganga dynasty that ruled Karnataka started traditional sculptures that have been continuing for two thousand years. Basavalingachari from the Jakanacharya hereditary started the Vishwakarma community structures. They came in groups and they settled in the village to construct temples. The Vishwakarma structures has been given the name Shilparamam and the village making these stone structure came to be known as the Heritage Village, by the government recently. Below outlined an account of the family which has been routinely engaged in stone craft. A case study method was followed for covering the practice of stone craft by an average craftsman’s family.

**Family Members :** 4-6

**Work force :** Outsourced Labour locally (3-6 Nos.)

**Hours of work per day :** 8-10 hours

### • Education:

Master had taught the craft of Shilpkala to the whole village. The disciples became the new masters of their families. The family passes on their traditional knowledge of craft to the next generation. Children study in school to the age of 15 after which they work under their family elders for gaining skills in stone craft.

### • Source of Raw Material:

The Stone is procured from the quarry named ‘Krishna Salai. The rocks are transported to the ‘Mahalakshmi’ industrial area (5 kms ) and are cut according to pre decided dimensions. The master himself chooses the rocks according to the sculpture ordered by the client.

**Raw Material:**

Stone– Sandstone, soft stone, Granite and marble, Brass, Silver, Gold and Panch Loha (Bronze, Gun metal, Gold, silver, Copper), Fibre (Acrylic and Fibre reinforced plastic).



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- **Clients:**

Donors of temples belonging to the following states, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Orissa Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

- **Custom:**

Ladies are not allowed to work on the idols as they are deities. The task is divided among the artisans according to the process (Cutting, Drawing, rough finishing, final finishing).

**Duration of Sculpting:**

2 weeks – 2 months and also up to 9 months in some cases (Subjected to scale, amount of detailing).

Tradition, culture and values represent Shivarapatna which is synonymous with the word sculpture and currently with about 700 members of 300 families are engaged in stone craft. The sculptors of Shivarapatna in Karnataka keep alive the 1,000-year-old artistic tradition. Shivarapatna is a unique village in the country which has been made into a traditional sculpture centre. Shivarapatna is- also renowned for its metal casting (Pancha Loha, an alloy of copper, zinc, lead, silver, and gold). Deities and warriors of Chalukyan Period are the main source of inspiration for Shivarapatna sculptures. It is believed that the Shilpi's, sculptors, of Shivarapatna are descendants of the craftsmen who constructed the temples of Belur, Hampi and Hoskote.

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## Place and People

### Place:

The village Shivarapatna is named after Shivarama who was a palegara / caretaker ruler who encouraged the art of stone carving. The tradition started with Basavalingacharya (the grandson of Shilpi Janakacharya, and a well-known sculptor in his own right), who was encouraged by Shivarama, to stay on at this village 1,000-1,100 years ago. Basavalingacharya's descendants still live in Shivarapatna, practising the Shilpa shastra tradition that has been passed down generations. Shilpa shastra and Vastu-shastra are the main basis. They consider themselves to be descendants of Vishwakarma, the architect of the universe, and largely belong to the Brahmin community. Around 75% of the whole population works in the stone carving industry making it a major hub of stone and rock art. The major occupation of Shivarapatna are tailoring, farming, carpentering, labour work, steel work, stone carving and vegetable vending.

The art and the techniques of stone art were learnt entirely under the guidance of a guru. The early style was of Cholas and later period saw a mix of all the styles of South India. There is a variety in usage of stones, according to the requirement. The stones used are granite, soapstone, Mysore Stone, Marble and sandstone. Three basic categories of stones are identified- male, female and neuter gender, on the basis of sound quality of the stone which is indicative of its iron content.

Earlier, the sculptures produced were religious sculptures, such as idols and columns for temples. Today the sculptors carve secular statues and portraits. The themes also vary accordingly on the basis of the demand in the market. Apart from idol making the artists also make entrance and pillars of temples, Tulsi pots, halo like structure to be placed at the back of the head of deities.

### People:

The craftsmen have adapted to new types of raw material such as re-enforced plastic to make life size statues of politicians and saints. They not only make statues in stone but also carry out metal casting processes in their in-built foundries to meet requirements of the market. The craftsman makes his own polishing tools to fit different sculpting needs to retain the familiarity of touch with the raw material. The craftsmen make polishing tools out of sandstone of varying grain density, size and grips. This allows him to access deep corners and crevices easily. External material such as sandpaper needs to be handled with care and have a short shelf life compared to sandstone. The tools are designed to ergonomically fit their hand dimensions and require little effort to carve.

A normal three-foot figurine takes about three months to complete and has to go through five stages of painting, polishing, cutting, carving and chiseling. Bronze and brass casting needs a larger setup and more man-power; the stiff competition doesn't leave much scope for diversion and expansion. The competition is so tight that craftsmen often charge much below the market rate just to have an edge over their neighbors and sell their products.

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Today, the main customers remain the newly-built temples or the old ones that need renovation and the sculptors claim that the stone deities can stand the test of time efficiently. The metal craftsmen were conventionally goldsmiths, but changed their medium of work with the changing demands of time; they are referred to as Sthapati and are well-versed in the Shilpa shastra, as described in the Vedas. Previously the idols used to have a slightly curved posture and now they all stand upright. They have unique style of sculpting: male deities with robust busts and slender waists and female deities with broad shoulders and lots of ornamentation.

Good sculptors can make upwards of Rs. 15,000 per month on average, according to one of the artisans interviewed but this is largely dependent on seasonal demand and specific orders. Recently the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd announced a Shilpi Gram for the village. The Shilpi Gram will be a platform for sculptors to exhibit their works and will also have a training centre. The idea is to encourage the younger generation to stay loyal to the family tradition of becoming a shilpkar or sculptor.





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## Work Enviornment

The view of working environment gives the idea of how the work is carried out. Raw materials on one side, working craftsmen, tools used, view of complete and incomplete structures. In one case it was seen that the craftsman divides his work area into two parts:

- Sculpting area
- Back yard for display

Though the backyard was small the craftsman had used this space efficiently to display his sculptures for visitors to see and purchase. He blended his contemporary work with his traditional work and this way he could portray his capability to cater different and new requirements.





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## Tools and Raw Materials

Tools:

Common Tools used for Stone Crafts are:

- Compass (Ttiwar)
- Pencil
- Steel ruler (L-shape)
- Red oxide to mark center and base of the statue
- Hammer
- chisels of different sizes and points
- Blades
- Grinding stone (to polish)
- Brick to sharpen the tools
- Cloth or brush to take the dust out (while polishing)
- Power Drill
- Die Grinder
- Stone Cutter

Raw Materials:

Raw materials used are:

- Stone– Sandstone
- Soft stone
- Granite and marble,
- Brass, Silver, Gold and Panch Loha (Bronze, Gun metal, Gold, silver, Copper)
- Fibre (Acrylic and Fibre reinforced plastic)

The stone used to make idols for temples as well as of a human consists of Black and grey granite which are locally available. In traditional language the artisans of the village call the black granite as 'Purush Shila' (Male Stone) and the grey granite as 'Stree Shila' (Female Stone), which is less hard, than the male stone. The artisan chooses the stones for making the idols according to the characteristics of the god or goddesses.

Few other stones are also imported from other states to make idols when there are any specific requirements of the client. Mostly the stone carving is done with the help of various traditional hand tools, which includes various kinds of iron chisels and hammers along with some measuring instruments like right angles and compass of various sizes. For finishing, waste grinding stones of various grades from the industries is used. The craftsman forges the iron chisels and they themselves do maintenance work like regular sharpening of the same in-house. In current time in order to increase productivity the artisans have started using basic power tools also like Power



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drills, Die grinders, stone cutters etc.



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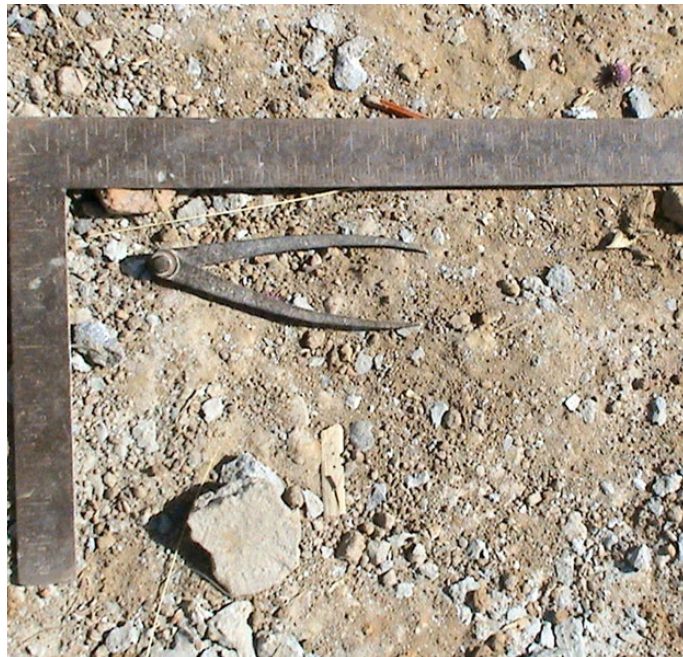
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## Making Process



Stone Craft Factory



Village and Stone Craft

**Process and Techniques:**

The carving process essentially has the following sequence:

- Selection of the stone (Hard granite, Soft Gray granite, Mysore stone, White granite) is done on the basis of the sculpture to be made, depending on male or female carving the artist wants.
- The artist prepares detailed Sketching of the sculpture in the form of template on the hard paper, if necessary he also makes the clay models too. If there is a change in the figure style e.g., cloth draping etc., he also makes a wax model of the sculpture, in small scale. All these techniques not only give the artist the rough idea of the sculpture, but it also helps them to understand the proportion of the sculpture. This helps the master craftsmen to communicate with their fellow craftsmen who work under them as trainee regarding the understanding of the form.

The master craftsmen divide the work of sculpting into the three parts depending on the shape and size of the structure to be made.

- The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.
- The trainee or the helping craftsman who is/are semi-skilled or in learning stage removes the rough extra part of the stone.
- The master craftsman himself does the final finishing.

- After getting the exact pictures of the sculpture, Dimensions of the figure to be manufactured are marked on a stone slab, the rough and extra portion are removed in order to get the basic shape, smooth or flat dressing is made to define each and every details. The marking on the stone is done by the red oxide in several layers. The red oxide is commonly available locally. The metal is crushed and then mixed with water in order to make red



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colour out of red oxide. The colour marks on the stone surface do not vanish while chiseling the surface.

- Final finishing of the surface is done by carborundam stones (Chane Kallu) & final polishing is done with water and emery papers. If the sculpture has to be painted in black, it is done with the colours which are extracted from local fruits, as sarkai, annabare and kenbabari (dry fruit) - these raw materials are heated, melted and used as colour pigment.

The main techniques used are as follows :

- Cutting - Round chisel, Flat chisel, Hammer (all of different size).
- Grinding - Die grinder with different beats size, Channel cutter.
- Buffing - Hand buffer, traditionally made coconut shell hair brush.
- Polishing - Local fruits, as sarkai, annabari and kenbabari (dry fruit) are used.

**Raw Material:**



Selection of stone for the figure to be sculptured.



These pictures tell about the selection of male and female stone depending on the colour and hardness.



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Hand Tools:



Large scale to mark the stone horizontally.



Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.



Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.



Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.

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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.

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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



An iron road use to lift the heavy stone.



Hammer of different weight and size to cut the stone.

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Buffing – Hand buffer, traditionally made coconut shell hair brush. Polishing– Local fruits, as sarkai, annabari and kenbabari (dry fruit) are used.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.

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Working Posture:



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## Shivarapatna Stone Crafts II

The Craft of Stone Carved Sculptures and Idols

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/shivarapatna-stone-crafts-ii/making-process>

Power Tool:



Small channel cutter to cut smaller surface.



Bigger channel cutter to cut the bigger surface.

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Die grinder to finish the area where the hand usually do not rich like curves and corners, in this machine the front stone can be replaced with the different kinds of stone.



Die grinder stone beads its available in different sizes and shapes.



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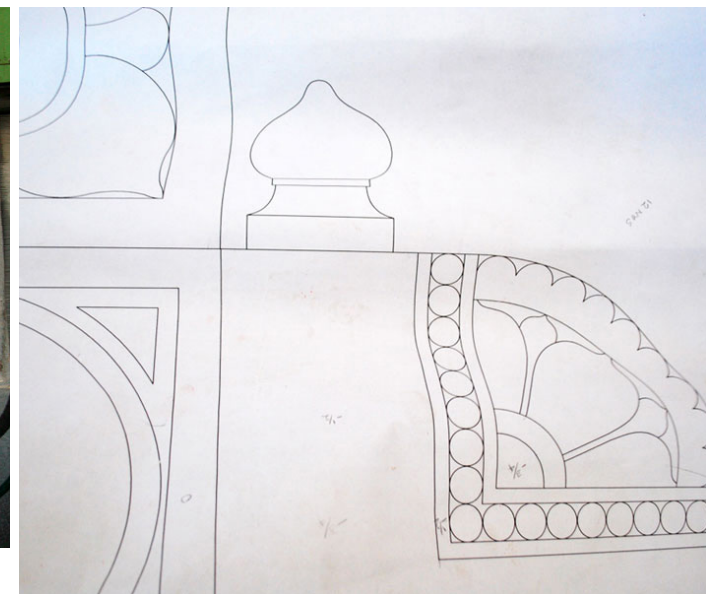
## Stone Craft Factory



An iron road use to lift the heavy stone.



Bigger channel cutter to cut the bigger surface.



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Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.

The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.

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Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



The master craftsmen divide the work of sculpting into the three parts depending on the shape and size of the structure to be made.



The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.



The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.

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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Hammer of different weight and size to cut the stone.



The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.

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The master craftsman does the marking on the rough stone.



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## Village and Stone Craft



Large scale to mark the stone horizontally.



Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.



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Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.





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Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Round chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Radial compass to measure the diameter and to get the proportion of the sculpture.



Flat chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.

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Flat chisel of different size with a pointed tip to cut the stone.



Polishing– Local fruits, as sarkai, annabari and kenbabari (dry fruit) are used.



Buffing – Hand buffer, traditionally made coconut shell hair brush.



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Die grinder to finish the area where the hand usually do not rich like curves and corners, in this machine the front stone can be replaced with the different kinds of stone.



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Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.



Stone filler, use to make the surface plane.

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## Adaptability and Innovation

Adaptability has become a part of Indian craftsman these days. Scarcity of resources and other constraints put pressure on artisans and craftsmen to become more adaptable and innovative in their daily life, and a lot of examples of this kind has been observed in contemporary Indian craft scenario. The craftsmen of Shivarapatna have adapted to new types of raw material such as re-enforced plastic and acrylic to make life size statues of politicians and saints. They not only make statues in stone but carry out metal casting processes in their in-built foundries to meet requirements of the market. Adaptability is also seen in the education system of the craftsmen families. Traditionally craftsmen hardly had any choice of pursuing different careers other than crafts of their family. He had to take the craft of his family as his career as he was the only son of his family. Children of the previous generation crafts people have gone to colleges and their children are going to good schools with intention of making it good in education.

The craftsmen have started to adopt new means of technology/ mechanization of production. In the modern industry set-up also use of traditional methods of measurements are still in practice. The designs are drawn on 1:1 scale in Auto-CAD, whose print outs are taken and pasted on the stone for carving purpose. Unlike traditional workspace, the workers' health issues are taken care of by providing protective gear and signage systems around the factory. Innovation was seen in the form of tools, protective gear, sitting place, etc. to utilize the material and the human resources optimally. In one of the instances, a craftsman was using cut out of tire/ tube rubber to make a glove to protect his hand and to absorb the vibrations of the tools. Tire or rubber baskets were used to carry and store tools as they could withstand the weight, shear and tear from the tools.

### Multiple Dimensionalities:

Craftsman shows multiple dimensionality in the form of their crafts and complexity of their expression is also seen in the form of detailing in the carvings. In the streets, letterforms take on shades of anthropomorphic life—sophisticated, three-dimensional, visually complex expression, where the very surface on which the painter works often becomes part of the message itself. The sign painters have turned letters into form, which are commonly seen in the crafts. The fonts printed on their advertisement had similar motifs which are seen in their sculptures. This adds a new dimension in the fonts to portray their complexity and inculcate the forms seen in their structures.

Different dimensions are added to the already existing sculptures to make them more complex and appealing. The statues seen in the industrialized stone carving industry (factory setup) had next level of complexity in the statues, for example, a chain made out of a single piece of stone and a stone ball in the mouth of the tiger statue. This portrays not only the complexity of expression of the craftsmen but also the skill. This is possible due to their acceptance of new forms of technology. According to the owner of the industrialized setup, these complex



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forms are possible due to complex tools which were also present long ago in different ways but got lost in time. The signboard with the name of the industrial setup, signs of safety and precautions put in the industry had mere simplicity depicting the life and form of expression of craftsman and his everyday life.

### Modularity:

Modularity, as a characteristic of design thinking, has efficiency as its guiding principle. Born of the competition for space and resources, the modular impulse in design seeks simple solutions to problems of everyday life. Modularity not only allows for space-saving efficiencies; it also allows one unit of the module to perform dual functions. Displays of food, cloth, and tools in shops across India are powerful evidence of the importance and persistence of Gestalt grouping principles. But the marketing of ordinary goods—which often are sold on the sidewalk or from a wooden hand-cart, or even on a basket carried on the head—also often involve elaborate design, display, and sales patten that have remained unexamined.





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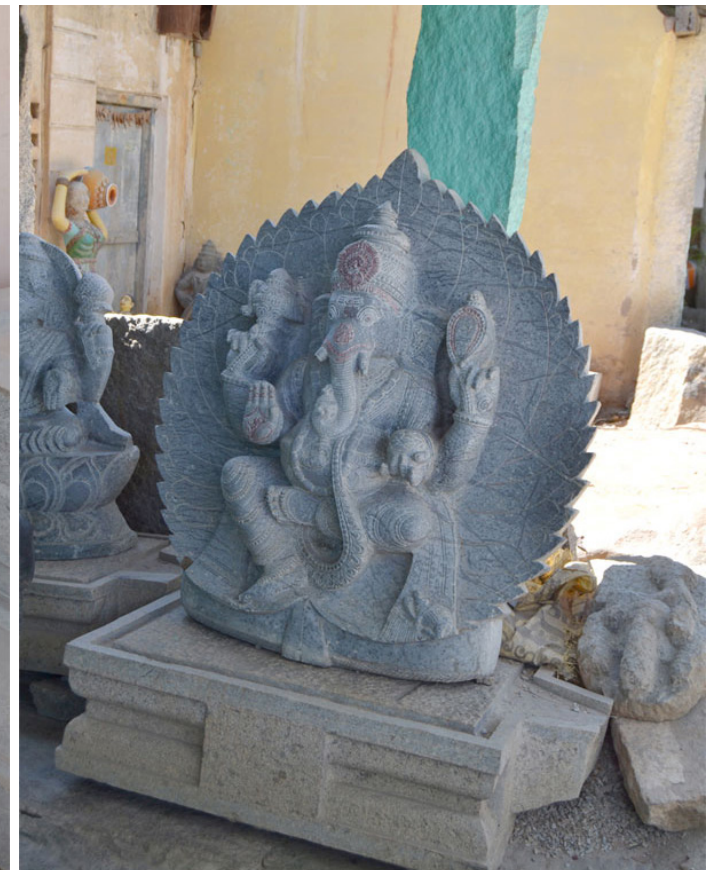
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## Products

The products one can find in Shivarapatna are mainly idols and statues for temples. The figures represented are common figures and deities of the Hindu religion. The same designs have been used for generations, respecting the traditional proportions of the sculptures. Generally the statues have the natural colour of the stone, but they can also be painted, in black or various colours.

The colours are made of local fruits, as sarkai, annabra and kenbabari (dry fruit). They are heated, melted and used as colour pigment. The artisans can also create personalized sculptures of their clients, whose picture is kept in front of the statue as the work progress. The finest the lines are, the more expensive the product will be. The price for one statue can be up to Rs. 25/- and a set of 4 statues costs Rs. 100/-. The price depends also on the dimensions of the idol.





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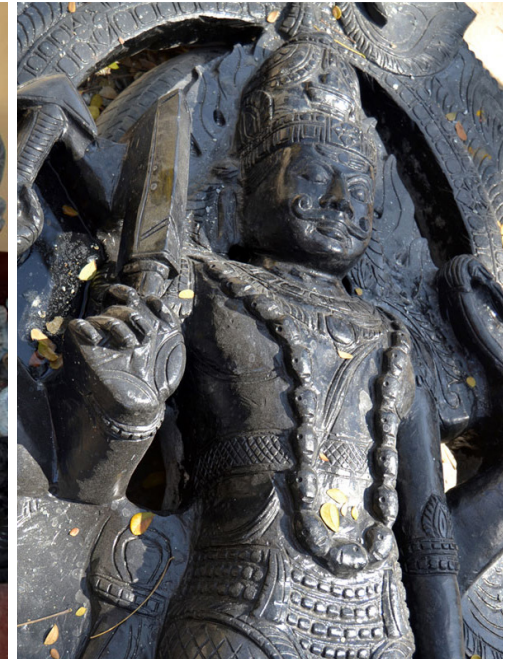
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## Links

- [Craft Design in India](#)
- [Online Infomation Centre for Crafts](#)
- [Handmade in India](#)
- [Crafts Council of India](#)
- [Craft Mark](#)
- [Arts and Crafts - Handicrafts and Handlooms](#)

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## Contact Details

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