

Design Resource

## Betel Nut Carvings - Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Handcrafted Objects

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T.  
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/betel-nut-carvings-bhubaneswar-orissa>



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## Introduction

The areca nut is the seed of the areca palm (*Areca catechu*), which grows in much of the tropical Pacific, South-east and South Asia, and parts of east Africa. India is the largest producer of areca nut and at the same time largest consumer also. Major states cultivating this crop are Karnataka, Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya and West Bengal. This seed is commonly used along with betel leaves, so it is easily confused with betel nut.

Betel nut originated in the Philippines or Malaysia, but it owes its Latin name, “*Areca cachu*,” to the Indian coast. The areca nut is not a true nut, but rather a fruit categorized as a berry. The areca palm fruit isn't prized as much as the nut. It is commercially available in dried, cured and fresh forms.

The nut inside is soft enough to be cut with a typical knife when the husk of the fresh fruit is green. As the fruit ripens, the husk becomes yellow or orange, as it dries, the fruit inside hardens to a wood-like texture. At this stage, the nut can only be sliced using a cutter, which looks similar to scissors.

Areca nut is capable of growing in a variety of soils. It requires abundant and well-distributed rainfall. It grows well within the temperature range of 14°-36°C. Areca nut can be grown in areas receiving annual rainfall of 750 mm to 4,500 mm. It can be cultivated up to an altitude of 1000 m in deep and well-drained soils with a low water table. Laterite, red loam and alluvial soils are most suited.

Chewing the mixture of areca nut and betel leaf is a tradition, custom or ritual which dates back thousands of years. It is not known how or when the areca nut and the betel leaf were first combined into one psychoactive drug. Archaeological evidence from Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines suggest they have been used in tandem for at least 4000 years. In the Indian subcontinent, the chewing of betel and areca nuts dates back to the pre-Vedic period Harappan Empire.

Regular eating of areca nut has adverse side effects. Regular chewing of betel nut can also cause gum irritation and tooth decay. Habitual chewers of betel leaf and areca nut have a greatly increased risk of developing a range of serious diseases, including cancers of the mouth and esophagus.

Apart from using areca nut for consumption, it is also used in making handcrafted objects.

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Major component used in Betel Nut Craft.



Beginning Process of Adhesive.



Arranged Betel Nuts in the form of a Toy.



Artisan adding Enamel paint to the product.

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Artisan Painting the base layer of the Product.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials used for Betel Nut Carvings are as follows:

- **Areca Nut:** It is used to make the figurines.
- **Emery Paper:** It is used to smoothen the rough edges.
- **Chisel:** It is used to scrape the outer skin of the areca nut.
- **Glue:** It is used to stick the parts together.
- **Paints:** It is used to decorate idols or figurines.
- **Plyboard:** It is used as a support to keep the figurine.



Betel Nut is used as a basic raw material in Betel Nut craft.



Sandpaper is used to Polish or Clean the surface of the Betel Nut.

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Glue is used to stick the Betel Nuts to form a Toy Structure.



Chisel is used to Clean the Betel Nut to make its outer surface rough.

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## Making Process

- The idols of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra are made using areca nut.
- For making idols dried Areca nut is used.
- A chisel is used to clean the outer layer of the nut and is rubbed onto the emery paper to remove the unevenness.
- A big size areca nut with its bottom flat is placed on the piece of plywood, which acts as a pedestal.
- Glue is used to fix the areca nut onto the plyboard.
- Another nut is placed on the first nut and fixed using glue, which represents the face of the idol.
- Two small wooden pieces are pasted on the sides of the idol which represent the hands.
- A small piece in the shape of a teardrop is placed on the top of the head which represents the crown.
- In similar fashion other two idols, slightly smaller in size are made and placed next to the first idol.
- All three idols are pasted on the plyboard.
- Once it is dried, a coat of paint is applied to the idols and detailing is done and allowed to dry.

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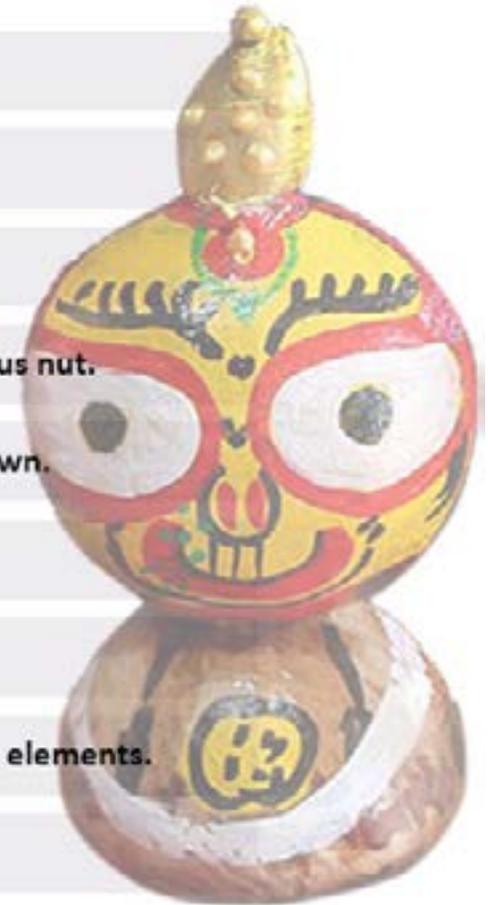
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Flowchart:

1. Areca Nuts are dried.
2. Outer layer of the nut is removed.
3. Nut is fixed on the plyboard which is the body.
4. Another nut representing the head is fixed on the previous nut.
5. A tear shaped nut is fixed on the head representing the crown.
6. Similarly two more idols are made little smaller in size.
7. All three idols are fixed on a piece of plyboard.
8. Paint is applied to the nuts and decorated using different elements.
9. After the paint dries the idols are packed.



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To get started, appropriate size betel nuts are taken.



Using chisel, the base layer of the betel nut is made flat.



Artisan rubs the betel nuts on the sand paper and makes the outer surface of the betel nut smooth.

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Artisan chisels the sides of the betel nut and makes it smooth.



Artisan adds a betel nut vertically on the glued Betel Nut that is on the wooden board.

Small wooden board is taken and artisan attaches three pieces of flat based betel nut horizontally on it using glue.

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Another piece of betel nut is added using glue.



Artisan adding hand portion for the toy and attaches appropriate shaped carved betel nut using glue.



Artisan holds the betel nut for a while after gluing in order to set the angle for the hand of the toy.

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Using a small betel nut, the artisan attaches a head portion for the toy.



Artisan adding the remaining Layer for the partially finished toy.



Hand portion is added for the other toys too.



After gluing, artisan holds the position of the hand and adjust it according to the position of the other hand, in order to make the hands of the toy to look similar.

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Using a brush and enamel paint, the artisan makes a base colour tone for each toy.



Artisan uses a brush and paints the face parts for the toy.



Using a sharp brush, artisan adds detailing to the face of the toys.



Facial expressions are given by the artist using brush.

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Artisan adding details for the hands of the toy.



Artisan adds contrasting colour combinations in order to make the toy look more attractive.



Colour outliners are used for more detailing.



Liquid sparkles are added to the top portion of the toy using the brush to make the toy shinier.

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Final Product.

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## Products

Miniature betel nut statues of deities like Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra for household shrines are made. Large temple structures or replicas of Jagannath's rath, and sacred chariot are made.

Miniature chairs and small toys are made for children.



Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra statues made out of Betel Nut.

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## Video



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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T. at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

You can get in touch with him at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu).

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

### Key Contact:

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