

Design Resource

## Sindoora (सिंदूरा)

A Wooden Craft

by

Ashish Kumar and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sindoora>



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sindoora/introduction>

## Introduction

Varanasi, the city of Lord Shiva and the holy Ganga is the world known for its rich culture. People have been following their traditions and passing them on from generation to generation.

There are colonies of craftsmen in Banaras for crafts like–Gulabi Meenakari, Panja Dari, Chunar Red Clay Pottery, Hand Block Printing, Wooden Craft and many more.

Khojwan is one of them; a suburban neighbourhood located in the south of Varanasi district (Uttar Pradesh). Khojwan is the place for making wooden crafts including Sindoora. Sindoora is a wooden vessel to keep sindoor which is a traditional vermilion red powder. Sindoora is a very crucial craft in Hindu culture on the occasion of their weddings. In Hindu culture, Sindoora comes into a woman's life on her wedding day. At the wedding, the groom brings a Sindoora full of sindoor and put it along the parting of the hair of his bride to get married. A married woman keeps it with her throughout her life. Sindoora is the symbol of love, care and Suhaag for a woman.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sindoora/kundera>

## Kundera

'Kundera' are craftsmen who work on turning wooden blocks to shape them into an art piece or product. The term Kundera came from the 'Koon' (a regional word), which means a lathe. And people who make products or artwork out of wooden by using Koon, called Kundera. At present People call them Kharadi also. According to Mr. Ram Khelawan Singh (age: 73), originally their ancestor came from Rajasthan and belonged to the Raghuvanshi community. During the Mughal period, they migrated from Rajasthan to Mirzapur, Benaras, Patna, Madhya Pradesh and various parts of India. For survival they had to work, so they started making wooden products for their livelihood. Initially, they made Pyali (bowl), Chauka-Belan (board and roller for roti making), Moosali (mal-let). They colored them with herbals. Thus, they made this work as their profession. Now, other people are also started making wooden crafts as their profession but they have learned it from Kundera only.

Ram Khelawan Singh is a craftsman who lives in Khojwan Varanasi. Now he is retired, he has a lot of experience in making and selling Sindoora. He told me a story related to the importance of Sindoora. Once upon a time, there was an occasional wedding. Ram Khelavan Singh was a young craftsman and his friend was the person who was going to marry. His friend was from a rich family so he bought a gold vessel to keep Sindoor. But at the time of ritual of 'Sindoordan' Pandit Ji rejected the vessel made out of gold and got angry. Pandit Ji argued that this vessel is not pure because it is made of gold and gold took the life of many people. It is the symbol of greediness and ego. Craftsman's friend realized his mistake and apologized for that. Pandit Ji asked him to bring a vessel made out of wood because wood is pure. So he came to Ram Khelavan Singh and asked for the wooden vessel. Ram Khelavan Singh gave him a beautiful Sindoora and that's how his friend completed the ritual of Sindoordan. There is a belief that without the wooden Sindoora, a wedding cannot happen in Hindu culture.



**Craftsmen:** Mr. Ram Khelawan Singh (left) and his son Ram Chandar Singh from Varanasi.

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## Sindoora (सिंदूरा)

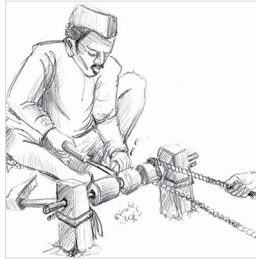
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### Koon (Lathe Machine)



Earlier Setup



Modern Setup

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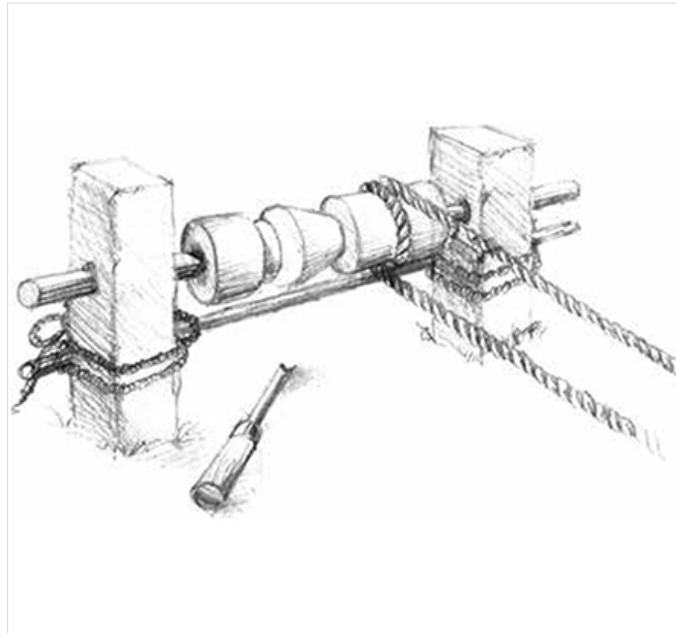
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## Earlier Setup

Earlier, the setup of the lathe was created by fixing two wooden posts in the ground according to the length of the work. These posts had spikes in them to hold the workpiece. The tool rest was formed by a long rod tied to the post by a piece of coconut rope. The motive power is transmitted by a rope which takes a couple of turns around the end of the workpiece. To operate the setup, two people were required. One would give the motion by pulling rope backwards and forward and the other one would carve the work.



Early Setup of Koon.



Craftsman working on lathe.

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Source:

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## Modern Setup

The Modern setup of the lathe is quite Similar to the earlier one. Wooden posts still exist. Now motive power transmitted by rubber strap driven by electricity. Chuck is there to hold the workpiece. A set of wheels and axis can drive multiple Koon (lathe) by rubber strap at the same time. So there is no need for an assistant to give motion to the lathe in a modern setup. Around 4 to 8 craftsmen can work together in a single space/workshop.



Modern setup.



Set of Wheels with Straps.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/sindoora/tools-and-raw-materials>

## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for Sindoora (सिंदूरा) making are as follows:

- **Sheesham/Eucalyptus Wood:** Basic raw material to make Sindooras.
- **Aara (saw):** It is used for cutting down raw material in small pieces.
- **Bosuli:** It is used for peeling wooden blocks.
- **Compass:** It is used for measurement.
- **Barma:** It is used for making a hole work.
- **Triphala:** It is used for fine carving. it has three sharp edges.
- **Banki:** It is used for carving the inner part of Sindoora.
- **Chaudhara:** It is used for external carving.
- **Battali:** It is used for cutting to separate work from the wooden block.
- **Rukhani Small:** It is used for carving design.
- **Rukhani Broad:** It is used for carving design.



Sheesham/Eucalyptus wood a basic raw material to make Sindooras.

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Aara (saw) is used for cutting down raw material into small pieces.



Bosuli is used for peeling wooden blocks.



Compass is used for measurement.



Barma is used for making a hole.



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Triphala is used for fine carving. It has three sharp edges.



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Banki is used for carving the inner part of Sindoora.



Chaudhara is used for external carving.



Battali is used for cutting and separating work from the wooden block.



Small Rukhani is used for carving design.

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Broad Rukhani is used for carving design.



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## Making Process



Body Making



Color Making

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Source:

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## Body Making

Usually, Sindoora is made in two parts– cap and body. To make Sindoora, small wood blocks are cut from the log using an Aara machine (saw) then a carver would peel one side of the block to make it fit for the chuck of the turning machine or lathe. After this, the craftsman peels off the outer rough skin with the help of some set of tools to give it a cylindrical shape. This shape is further used to give the required shape for the Sindoora Vessel. After this, the application of colored shellac (lacquer) on work is done on the lathe only. While the lathe keeps revolving, the heat generated by friction softens the shellac, making the color stick to the surface of the work. Then they shine the color by rubbing a local material like the peel of bamboo.



Cutting wooden log in small pieces.

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Peeling one side of wooden piece to make it fit for chuck.



Fixing wooden block in chuck.



Making cylinder Shape.



Shaping Sindoora.



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Sanding to get smooth surface.



Lacquering.



Rubbing with local material to shine the product.



Putting a cap.

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## Color Making

Color sticks are made by 'Chapada'. Chapada is the glue that is derived from natural resources like a tree. It comes from the secretion of insects. It harvests four times a year. Mostly, It comes from Bengal and Bihar. India is the largest producer of lacquer. Craftsmen buy lacquer from Bengal.

Lacquer is melted using burning coal and resin will be put on the Chapada which helps lacquer to melt quickly. Once the lacquer is properly melted, titanium dioxide, pearl and different chemical colours are added to it. After this, long sticks of lacquer are made and then cut into small pieces.



Lacquer is glue that is directly obtained from the trees.

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Lacquer is glue that is directly obtained from the trees.



Lacquer is melted using burning coal.



Resin is used to melt lacquer quickly.



Melted Lacquer with color.



Long sticks of lacquer.



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## Types of Sindoor

There are various sizes and designs of Sindoor. Large and broad one is famous and traditional structure in Patna/ Bihar. Earlier Sindoor used to be simple, now they have started decorating them. Box Sindoor, Locker Sindoor, Sugga (parrot) Sindoor and temple shape Sindoor are some of the examples of Sindoor.



Decorated Sindoor.



Simple Sindoor.



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Decorated Sindooras.



Temple shape Sindooras.



Sugga (parrot) Sindoora.

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Newly wed bride with Sindoor.

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## Video



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## Links

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Source:

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Ashish Kumar, M. Des. Student at **IDC, IIT Bombay**.

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