

Design Resource

Soap Stone Carving - Mysore

The Craft of Soap Stone Carving

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/soap-stone-carving-mysore>



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Introduction

Mysore- the city of palaces is located about 146 km southwest of Bangalore in Karnataka state. Mysore is hub of cultural arts and handicrafts. Famous Mysore painting, Rose Wood inlay and typical Mysore silk sari are world renowned crafts from Mysore. The unique soapstone carving also adds weight to the cultural wealth of Mysore. The history of Soapstone carving in Mysore dates back to many centuries and well patronized by royal kingdoms. Mysore is the center of Soapstone carving due to abundant availability of soapstone deposits, which is available in and around Mysore. H.D.Kote near Mysore is the center for soapstone deposits. Many skilled artisans are engaged in carving soapstone to create fascinating artifacts with graceful expressions. The block of stone is first marked as per the design to be carved and it is carved out using chisels of different sizes to obtain the intricate patterns. Enhanced outlook, Smooth finish and detailed designs are the result of great craftsmanship.

All the carved products mainly used in several religious temples in and around Mysore and also sent to the all over places in India based on the orders. Some of the contemporary art forms are carved based on special requests by the end users. In Karnataka, Shivarapatna and Malur are other major centers for stone carving.



Image of Lord Krishna with flute.

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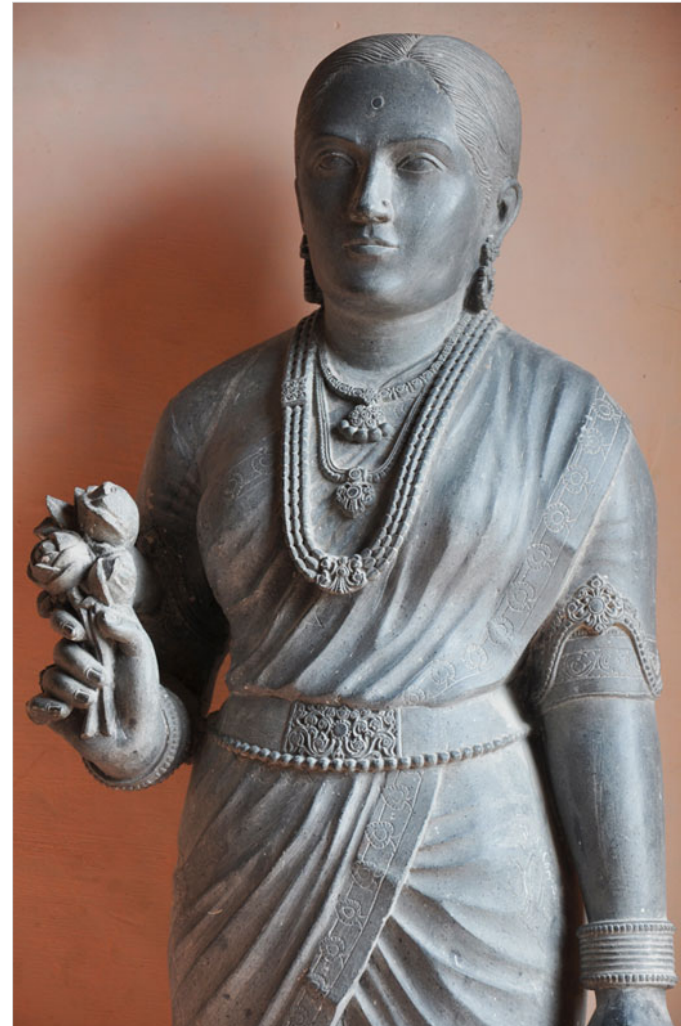
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The soft texture of soapstone enables detailed carving.



Artisans involved in stone carving.

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Blocks of soapstone are stored in open place.

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Idols of Lord Rama, Sita and Laxmana are carved out of soapstone.



A carved piece depicting footprint is basically used in temples.



The skilled artisans in Mysore.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Soapstone locally called as Krishna Shila is the basic raw material available in brown, tan, yellow, red, gray, pink, white and black colors. Soapstone can be easily carved due to its soft nature which consists mostly of lac. Soapstone is soft when it is freshly bought from the quarries; later the stone becomes harder after 2 to 3 years. Rough and detailed carvings are done using small number of tools of different sizes such as hammer, chisels-for fine detailed carving, compass and scale for measuring and few automated drilling/hand drills/tools to create intricate designs on the stone. Metal paste is used to coat the carved idol after smoothing as it helps to enhance the glossy finish of the idol.

List of tools used:

1. Channi - it is used to give shape of the stone while carving.
2. Manevali - Jumper used to give the sharp detailing on the statue.
3. Kaiwara - divider used to adjust symmetry of statue.
4. Alpas - it is used to flatten the shape.
5. Kolower uli - sharp edged chisel used to carve the ornaments of an idol.
6. Molomatta - Scale is used for scaling purpose.



Basic raw material- blocks of Soapstone.



Hammer, chisel and scrapers used while carving.

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Scale is used to mark dimensions.



Wide and point-edged chisels used for detailed carving.



Chisels of different sizes.

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Automated tool used to smoothen the outer surface of stone.



Metal paste used to obtain glossy finish of an idol.



A closer view of all tools used in stone carving.

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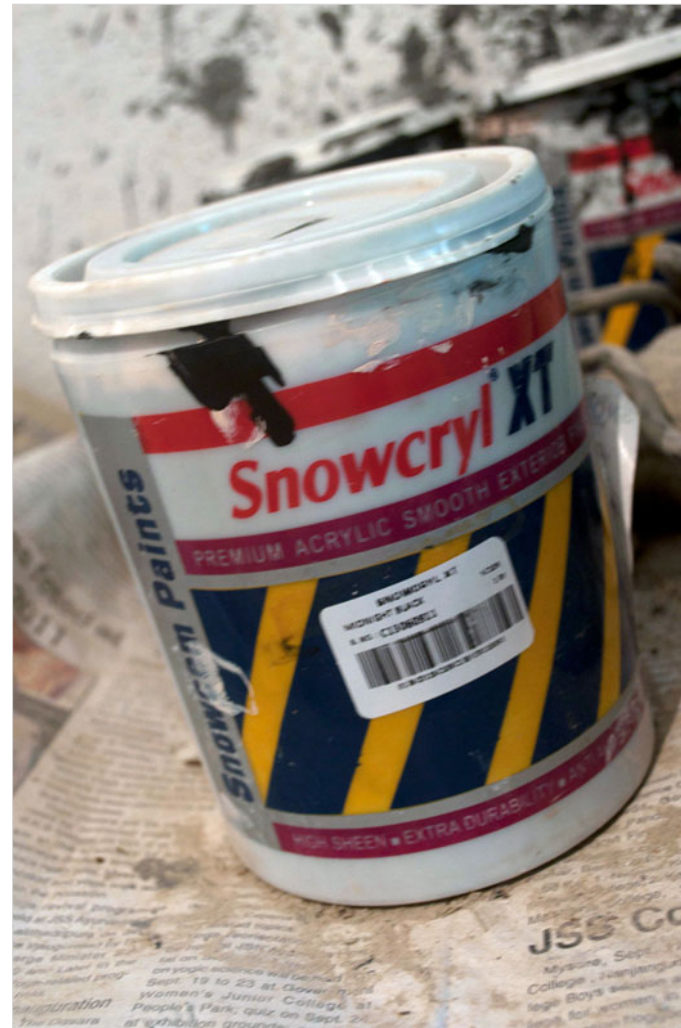
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Acrylic paint is used to coat/paint the carved idols to get black shiny look.

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Making Process

The highly skilled artist with his great effort makes the art piece by following several steps such as stone cutting, marking, rough carving, detailed carving and final finishing. Fine quality soapstones are procured and stored in bulk. The big block of stone is first roughly cut into proper shape. Then, the proportions are marked on the stone using divider tool. The unwanted stone portion is removed during the carving process. The reference paper with the design is placed on the stone and the design is traced on the stone. Based on the traced design, the shape of the idol is first roughly cut and then carving is done with chisel and hammer. The rough carvings are made first. Once the base shape of idol is revealed, then the detailed carvings are made with sharp edged chisels and jumpers. The idol is rubbed with stone to smoothen the outer surface. Finally, the idol is coated with metal paste to obtain the glossy finish. Different types of traditional products include Images of Lord Krishna with flute, Lord Hanuman, Lord Rama with Sita and Laxmana and Shaneeswara. Contemporary forms also carved based on the market requirement.



Big block of stone is first roughly cut.



The rough outer texture is removed by carving.



Dimensions are marked with the help of compass.



Design reference is placed on the stone to mark the shape.

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The reference paper used while carving.



Artisan measuring the length of the stone using tape.



The unwanted portion of the stone is removed.

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Dimensions of the face are being marked on the stone.



Carving is continued based on the marks.



Artisans involved in detailing work and carving.

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Artisan engaged in carving the clothing part of an idol.



Intricate carvings are done using sharp edged chisels by scraping.



Files are used to give detailed carving.



The excess dust after carving is removed with a grass brush.

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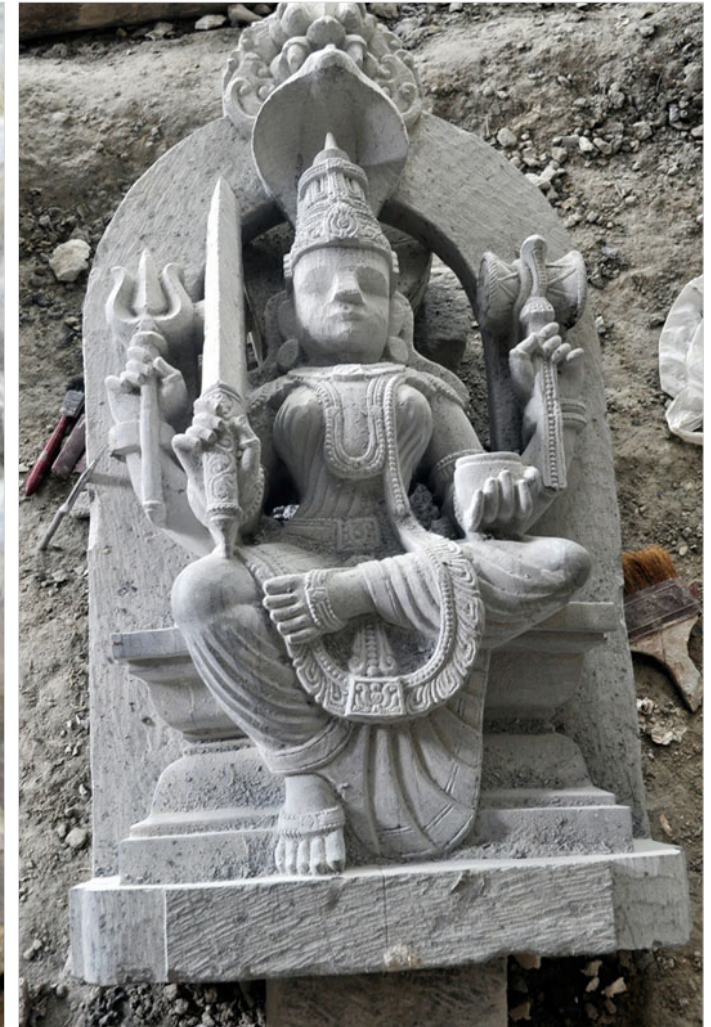
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Outer surface of the idol is smoothed by rubbing it with stone.



The carved idol is kept ready for final finishing.

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Few idols are coated with metallic paste to obtain glossy look.



Black acrylic painted on the idol to obtain black shiny look.

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Products

Beautiful stone idols are aesthetically carved by traditional sculptors of Mysore. Rich and intricate carving talks about the traditional carving similar to Hoysala style, Pallya style, Chola style, Rashtrakuta style of carvings. The skilled artisans give life to the stones by carving graceful facial expressions, intricate jewelry designs. Different gestures, poses and the expressions of every idol are unique and typical for their motifs and carvings. Carved images of god and goddess are influenced by Hindu mythologies and epics. Apart from traditional style of carving, the artisans also introduced contemporary form of carving to meet the latest trend. The contemporary art forms are ideal as decorative pieces. Traditional art forms include images of deities like-Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lakshmana and goddess Sita, Lord Vinayaka, Lord shiva in the form of Linga. Idols of freedom fighters, saints and some other royal personalities of Mysore are carved as per the customer requirements.



Soapstone idol depicting Royal women.



Tile carved with flower motif.



Nandi-Bull in sitting posture.

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Goddess image carved in black soapstone.



Carved stone idols of deities in black and white soapstone.



Lord Hanuman with his weapon holding in hand.

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Shiv Linga-Form of Lord Shiva.



Idol of Lord Ganesha is intricately embellished with floral motifs.

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Image of Lord Shaneswara with crown carved from the soapstone.

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Video



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