

Design Resource

Tribal Paper Mache Mask

Bohada Festival

by

Ketki Saxena

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask>



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask/introduction>

Introduction

In India, masks are used in both rituals and in various theaters for their expressive power. They are usual elements in many traditional ceremonies, rituals and festivals. In Indian tribal culture, the mask has an important place. These characters of tribal masks represent either deity, ancestral spirit, totem, mythological character, an event, royal personalities, animals or birds. Masks are made up of clay, paper pulp, metal, wood, bamboo, cow dung, tin and leather.

Tribals believe that masks represent the presence of their God or Goddess with them, who provides moral and spiritual support to them. There is only one tribal town called “Jawhar”, from Thane district in Maharashtra state, which represents 52 tribal mask characters. Every year these 52 masks are taken in procession, which is celebrated as a mask festival called ‘Bohada’.



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Source:

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Place

Maharashtra state ranks second as regards tribal population size in the country. There are 47 tribal communities in Maharashtra. Thane is the only prominent tribal district having mask cults. Jawhar Tahsil is a thickly populated tribal block in the Thane district. It is geographically located towards the western side of Mumbai and is 160 km away from this mega city. Ramkhind- Sakur village and Kalidaund village are the two places in Jawhar Tahsil where masks are made. These villages are away from the main cities and towns and are underdeveloped.



Local children.



A woman relaxing after daily chores.



Tribal kids.



A kid sitting at her house entrance.

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Shying faces.



Tribe's house.



Boys watching nature view.



Scenery.

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A girl playing on her veranda.



Tribe's house.



Roof of tribe's house.



River dam in the village.

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Water source.



Greenery all around.



Tribal kids posing for a click.



Nature.

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People

Some of the major tribes found in Jawahar are Konas, Warlis, Mahadev Kolis, Thakars, Dhor Kolis, Malhar Kolis, Dublas, Korkus and Katkaris. According to a previous study reference, only these 9 tribes out of 47 found in Maharashtra are known for making masks. Though these tribes are different from each other according to their unique culture, all of them participate in the Mask festival. The purpose of making these masks is that tribals believe these supernatural characters are with them during their rituals and festivals.

Sharavan Gavit from Kalidaund village is a mask maker who makes only traditional masks. He has been making these masks since the past 25 years and pursued them as a hobby. He earns his living by working in a workshop as an instructor for making wooden handicraft products. He is married and has two children.

The other two artists are Subhash Dharma Kadu and Bhagvaan Dharma Kadu from Ramkhind hamlet. These are the sons of famous mask maker Dharma Rama Kadu. They have acquired the art of mask making from their father and follow it as their profession. Along with the traditional mask, which is displayed in the Bohada festival, Subhash also makes paper mache masks as per demand. He has also started making paper mache toys of rabbits, deer, monkeys, etc. In cities like Mumbai, Pune and Calcutta the demand for such toys is higher. He also visits art institutions and trains urban children in the art of mask-making. His wife Madhuri also helps him with his work.



Mr. Shravan Gavit.



Mrs. Madhuri Dharma Kadu.

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Mr. Bhagvaan Dharma Kadu.



Shravan in workshop.



Shravan with Daughter.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask/tools-and-raw-materials>

Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for Tribal Paper Mache Mask are as follows:

- **Clay:** It is the basic material used for preparing the dough.
- **Paper:** It is used for making paper mache.
- **Gum:** Natural tree gum is used as a binding agent.
- **Wooden Tools:** These are used for shaping masks.
- **Acrylic Tools:** These are also used for shaping masks.
- **Brushes:** These are used for painting masks.
- **Colours:** Bright colours are used for painting masks.

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Dharma Kadu's workshop.



Clay, paper mache and dhaman tree used as a raw material.

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Dhaman tree skin is peeled off from the stem and soaked in water for preparing gum.



Artist extracting natural gum from dhaman tree.



Wooden tools used for shaping masks.

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Acrylic tools used for shaping masks.



Different types of brushes.



Colours and brushes for painting.

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<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask/making-process>

Making Process

Preparing the Paper Mache

The process of making a paper mache mask begins with preparing a paper mache. Pieces of paper are soaked in water till they soften. Water is squeezed from soaked paper pieces. The softened pieces are then beat with the help of mortar and pestle till it forms mache. Dhaman tree gum and clay are mixed into the mache. Now the dough is prepared for the moulding process.



Small pieces of paper are soaked in water.

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These paper pieces are soaked in water for a while till it softens.



Squeezing some water from soaked paper pieces.



Soaked paper pieces kept in mortar and pestle.



Artist beat it with the help of a mortar and pestle till it forms a mesh.

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Paper mache.



Mixing Dhaman tree gum with paper mache.



Paer mache and natural gum mixing.



Ready paper mache used for moulding.

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Moulding

Clay is kept on the newspaper and is shaped into the shape of the face. Now the prepared dough is used for making mould. The shape of the face is given to the mould. The facial features like nose, ears, lips, etc. are detailed using wooden and acrylic tools. Smoothing is done with wet hands. After this process, the mask is kept for drying.



News paper, paper mache, clay and Dhaman tree gum is used as a raw material.



Clay is kept on a newspaper.



Artist preparing basic shape of mask.



Artist mixing clay, paper mache and Dhaman tree gum.

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Mould making.



Shape of face is prepared.



Ear is being made.



Nose is being made.

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Smoothing it with wet hands.



Acrylic tools are used for shaping facial features.



Shaping lips and nose.



Working on detailing.

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Artist giving final shape.



Smoothing with acrylic tool.



Ready mask kept for drying.



Mask is smoothed by rubbing a stone over it and polishing is done.

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Paint

A dried mask is smoothened by rubbing a stone over it and polishing is done. Oil paints are used for the colouring process. The base colour is applied to the mask. The crown is coloured with golden colour. A black colour is used for the eyes. The painted mask is kept for drying.



Oil paints are used for mask painting.



Dry mask before painting.



Artist preparing colours.



Preparing base colour.

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Artist painting face of mask.



Golden colour is applied on crown.



Applying golden colour.



Trunk is also highlighted by applying golden colour.

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Eyes are painted in black colour.



Colouring of eyebrows.



Painted Mask kept for drying.

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Products

The paper mache masks are used for the Bohada festival. The 52 different masks of Indian Gods and Goddesses are displayed during the festival. The performance is given by mask wearers during the Bohada festival. A procession is carried out during the festival with these masks. This festival gives an opportunity to local artists to show their skills.



Mask before painting.



Mask before painting.

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God's Mask.



Ganesha's Mask.

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Ganesha's Mask.



Dait – a male demon's Mask.

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Masks kept for drying before painting.



Masks kept for drying before painting.



Hanuman's Mask.

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Sharp facial features of the mask.



The crown of the mask.

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Ganesha's Mask.



God's Mask.

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Apart from face masks, artists make other products.

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Bohada Festival

Bohada is a mask festival of the tribes in the Thane and Nasik district, which is held for three days. It is celebrated every year during the month of May, any time after or between Hanuman Jayanti, Gudhi Padva or Naag Panchami. Tribal and non-tribal people from nearby places attend these three days festivals. In this festival, 52 masks of Indian Gods and Goddesses are exhibited. Mask owners wear these masks and give several performances during this celebration. Some chief mask makers, village heads and elder villagers organize this festival. The mask owners are responsible for maintaining their masks. These masks are renovated every year some days before the festival and later on preserved for next year.

The festival takes place in different villages of Thane district but the one celebrated in Bharsat Meth village is the most famous even though Mokhada village is considered to be the birthplace of the festival. The eight different villages where Bohada is organized are:

1. Mokhada bohada, Dist - Thane
2. Kardan Bohada (on Gudi Padva)
3. Bharsat meth bohada (on Akshay Tritiya)
4. Denga chi meth bohada
5. Vehel pada bohada, Taluka Vikramgad,
6. Jawhar bohada, Dist - Thane, (on Ram navami)
7. Poyshet Bohada
8. Kokada bohada

The purpose of Bohada is to show gratitude to the Village Goddess (Gaon Devi) including all other Gods and Goddesses. As told by Madhuri Kadu, seven days before the Bohada festival tribals grow rice in a small basket. By the third day, these seedlings become 6-7 inches tall and are offered to the Gaon Devi. Bohada, which means procession, displays mask characters that depict the tribal concept of creation and their role in sustaining their life.

The 52 different masks displayed during the festival are (ref. Tribal Mask and Myths pg.27):

Naran dev, Masa, Sarjadevi/ Saraswati – peacocks, Ganpati, Mahadev, Indradev, Khanderao, Kaloba, Niloba, Bhairoba, Kalbhairi, Ram Tati, Kaurav Tati, Hedumba, Mahisasur, Bakasur, Ravan, Vishnudev, Chanddev, Suryadev, Bhim-Bakasur, Raktadevi, Ghubadevi, Agnidev, Londhya, Narsihva, Satwai, Kumbha karma – Brother of Ravan, Bhibisan - Brother of Ravan, Krishna, Charnin – a female herder, Toap – a man with cap, Balantin – new mother, Gavalani – a female herder, Garud - Eagle, Waghoba - Tiger, Sinhva – Lion, Kasav – Tortoise, Dait – a male demon, Bhil Tati, Ekadas – one headed mask, Duvadas – two headed mask, Zakati Tati, Vithoba, Rukhmai, Vetat, Gajasur, Ghoda, Evana, Dhavloba, Maha Laxmi, Shivaji Maharaj.

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Some Video Link for Bohada Festival:

- Bohada Festival Dance with Mask night

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3mkOfQwbQ4>

- Bohada Festival Day

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xk3ukp_tribal-culture-bohada-festival-day_lifestyle

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask/bohada-festival>

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/tribal-paper-mache-mask/links>

Links

Tribal Mask & Myths by Robin D. Tribhuwan & Laurence Savelli

- http://books.google.co.in/books?id=dS3n_NRSO40C&pg=PA5&lpg=PA5&dq=tribal+mask+and+myths&source=bl&ots=_vaAQQWKpA&sig=704gc93In9V_b-PmkMZ2OT_dqg8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4_MOT-7bNo3trQfigrS-6Dw&ved=0CHEQ6AEwCw#v=onepage&q=tribal%20mask%20and%20myths&f=false

Bohada Festival Dance with Mask night

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3mkOfQwbQ4>

Bohada Festival Day

- http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xk3ukp_tribal-culture-bohada-festival-day_lifestyle

Interview of Mr. Ramchandra Dharane, Former President of Devasthan Trust, Mokhada

- http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xk3vfp_tribal-culture-bohada-festival-information_lifestyle

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Video



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Contact Details

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