

Design Resource

Wooden Bhoota Figures - Udupi, Karnataka

Art of Traditional Udupi Wooden Statue Making
by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C S and
Lija M G
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/wooden-bhoota-figures---udupi-karnataka>



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Introduction

Bhoota Figures are taken or based on the Puratana Kala (olden traditions) or it is on the religious beliefs (Dharmika Nambike) that led the people of the villages. It is a traditional art that is transferred only from the forefathers to the next generation, seen in the Basrur region of Udupi in Karnataka.

Generally, these figures are made in the month from January to July that is sold more in temples of Kundapura taluk, South Canara, (Dakshina Kannada) and the Udupi district. The worship of these types of idols is usually seen in the Tulu Nadu regions of Karnataka. Bhoota is referred as ethereal spirits or demigods that protect the people of the village from evil. It is a prehistoric ritual form of worship that exists within the Tulu speaking community of people.

These are characterized into three classes based on the spirits namely the Hindu pantheon, Glorified human beings and Heroic warriors such as the twins etc. The coastal part of Karnataka is generally known for the two forms of art namely Bhoota kola and the ritual dance of Yaksagana. Bhoota Staana can be anything from a platform under a tree in the open air to huts with thatched roofs. The Bhoota be represented by a crude stone, a mask, or metal objects of various shapes or finely carved wooden sculpture or metal idols. The literary meaning of Bhoota means ghost, these are referred to as Gods who protect the villages.

During the festival, the ceremony runs till late at night in the well-decorated pandal made from palm leaf, mango leaf and areca flowers and a ritualistic stage covered with the image of deities on one side and devotees on the other. It is also accompanied by a group of musicians holding drums and wind instruments played at varying tempos suiting to the stages and processions. The normal size of the figures is 1-2 feet to 15 feet in height and to carve intricate profiles to painting requires a minimum of ten days and if the design is more it requires further time. For which the carvings of the idols are usually done on the trees like Hebbel, Halasu, sandalwood, etc.

Gudigar community in the name of M/s Shree Shyla Fine Arts is involved in this art for 3 last generations, with expertise in different types of Bhoota figures and other types of wood carvings. This community can be contacted in Kundapura.

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Bhoota figures are basically wooden God idols worshiped in the south.



Craftsmen carving the idol of God Nandi.



The idols are painted with bright colors to enrich the look.



These figures depict the different forms of God Shiva and Goddess Parvathi.

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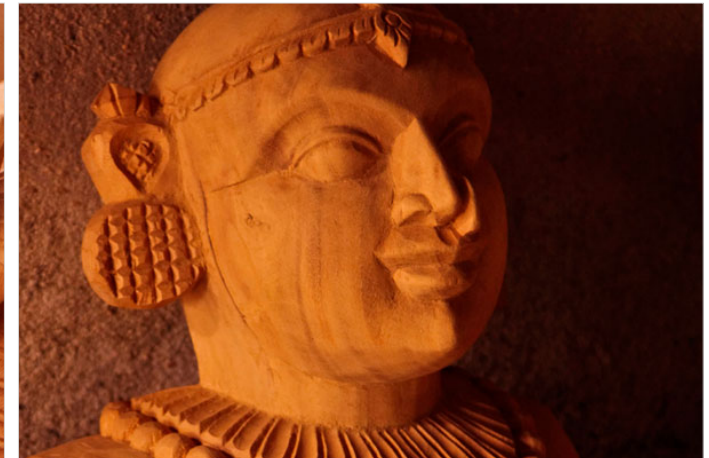
Different stages of a carved idol.



The craftsmen's family has procured this craft skill from generations.



Carved figure of Nandi and Varaha Swamy.



The figures are carved in different length according to the customer's request.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Some of the tools used for making the wooden Bhoota figures are as follows:

- **Jackfruit Wood:** Wood is preferred for making Bhoota Figures.
- **Pencil:** To draw the outline on the wooden pieces before carving.
- **Hammer:** It is used for hammering and to bring in the impression of an object.
- **Chisel (Uli in local):** Big and small chisels are used for basic carving.
- **Wooden Mallet:** To hit (knock) the wooden pieces together.
- **Rekaecherana, Cherana (Carving tools):** These are used for carving the intricate portions of god characters onto the wood.
- **Files:** It is used to obtain an even surface on the wood.
- **Trisquare:** To measure the right angle and straightness of the idols.
- **Sandpaper:** It is used to smooth the surface of the wood after carving.
- **Turpentine:** It is used as a solvent for the paint (for organic synthesis).
- **Sprayer:** To spray the colors onto the smooth idol surface.
- **Paints (Enamel):** Different colors are used to highlight the characters.
- **Brushes:** Different sizes of brushes are used to paint the detailing of the characters on the carved wooden pieces.
- **Synthetic Varnish:** It is used to obtain shining/ luster effect.
- **Cleaning Brush:** To clean very fine dust on the carved wood before spray painting.
- **Hand Saw:** It is a tool with toothed edges used for cutting wood.
- **Wood Adhesive:** To join the parts of the idol.

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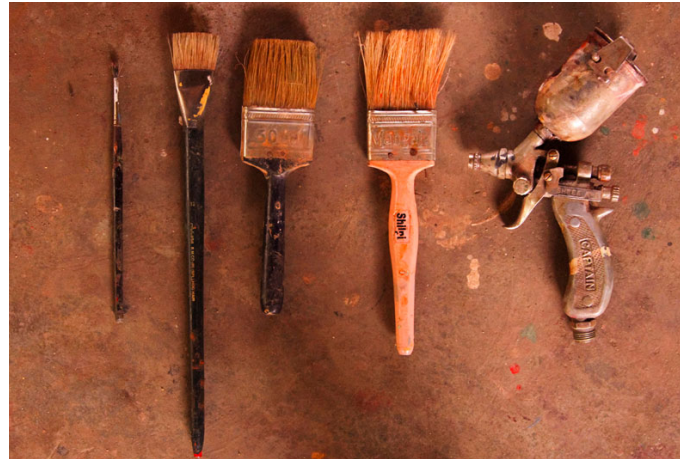
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Different sizes of brushes are used to paint the figures.



Enamel paints are used to color the figures as they are long lasting.



Varieties of chisels and files are used to carve the wood into desired idol.



Spray gun is used to paint as it takes less time and spreads the color evenly on the surface.

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Halassu or Hebburu wood is used to carve the idols.



Synthetic varnish is applied for shine and luster.

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Making Process

It starts from a pooja and distribution of prasadam among devotees of the tree which is considered for carving Bhoota figures. Generally, customers help the craftsmen to locate Hebbelsu and Halasu trees in their region which are sacred for these kinds of idols. Gudigar community get regular orders to carve Bhoota figures and are replaced with old ones as they fade due to various factors like age of wood, deterioration of surface treatment (wood paint).

Seasoned wood log is used and sawed to obtain a block of the required size, on which rough sketching is done with a pencil looking at other idols and based on the experience of a craftsman. Unwanted wood is removed layer by layer in large quantities (rough carving) and the same process of removing the wood is continued in small quantities (semi-finish carving) and continued using scraping tools. Detailing of body parts like eyes, nose and ears are done with carving tools to obtain a well-crafted idol. Hands are made separately and joined using a keel (structure member) with wood-adhesive to wedge (fix in place) the hands to the body.

The outer surface of the body is treated with enamel paint as a basic coat. Further, a coat of wood varnish is applied to get smooth finish. Other parts like the eyes, and nose are painted with various sizes of brushes to increase the look of the idol. The earlier chemical powder was preferred for coloring the statue that used to flow away when it comes in contact with water. For the past thirty years, enamel paints are preferred for coloring onto the statue. After the painting is completed, an artificial sword and Trishula are fixed to the statue.

It takes about two and a half to three months to complete small idols, whereas 3 to 4 months is required for bigger sized idols of around 6 to 7 feet as per the intricacy of the design. Ornaments are decided and carved based on the style (shyali) of the idol.

Finally, finished statues are delivered by performing pooja (referred to as Kala Koduvudu or Bettu Koduvudu which means asking forgiveness to the tree for hurting it to make it into a carved form) to temples, where priests perform rituals on a daily basis as it turned to the idol for worshipping.

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Markings on wood blocks helps artisan for carving.



The wooden blocks chiseled to acquire the desired shape.



The idols are made of Halassu wood particularly, as it is believed to be sacred for making God idols.



The basic shape of the idol.

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Varieties of chisels are used to get the appropriate forms.



It takes about 2-3 days to carve a small idol and a minimum of 8-10 days for 6 to 7 ft height idols.



The ornamental designs are carved with small (scoop) chisel.



Facial parts are carved in the end as it takes more time and concentration to acquire the precise shape.

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Parts like hands are carved separately and joined for big idols.



Profile or V shaped chisels are used to carve grooves



Wooden piece is inserted to join the parts together as fastener.



Wood adhesive is used to join parts.

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Piece of hand is inserted the part and interlocked.



These God idols are the attendants of the respected main Gods.



The carved articles are filed to even the surface and give a proper shape to the idol.



Surface is smoothed using sandpaper.

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Finished idol is cleaned with a brush.



Enamel paint is used to protect and color using spray gun.



Turpentine is added to acquire the required viscosity of the paint.



The idols are painted with bright colors.

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Enamel paints are used as they are long lasting colors.



The dress is painted with dark bright colors and ornaments are painted with yellow colors to give a golden shade.



The eyes are carved big and painted with bright colors.



The color combinations are continued from the generations and there has been no changes made.

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Products

Different figures are carved out and painted on wooden pieces with the character of the Gods and goddesses. The idols are usually made of Halassu wood which is said to be sacred for making idols of God. Some of the carvings are of Varaha Swamy (one form of Lord Vishnu), God Nandi, and the Three-headed Bhoota idol, the incarnation form of Lord Shiva. For smaller idols, it cost around five to eight thousand rupees.

Some of the names of the Idols are as follows in local languages.

1. Mara Kaali
2. Yakshiamma
3. Holanakae Horugobarae (ox)
4. Koti and Chennaya (Koti Chennaya huritaru)
5. Horagupari
6. Huhankali
7. Huli Devaru
8. Panjuri (Handi roopa)
9. Higuni Nandi
10. Parle Chiku
11. Matte Chiku
12. Avatar Chiku
13. Chikkamma



Carved article of three headed satan (bhoota).



Varieties of bhoota idols of different gods worshiped in the temple.

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Carved idol of one of the forms of Goddess Parvathi.



Idol of a tiger represented as a ride of Goddess Durga.

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Idol of a satan (rakshasa), attendant of Lord Shiva.



Idol of Veerabhadra expressing anger.

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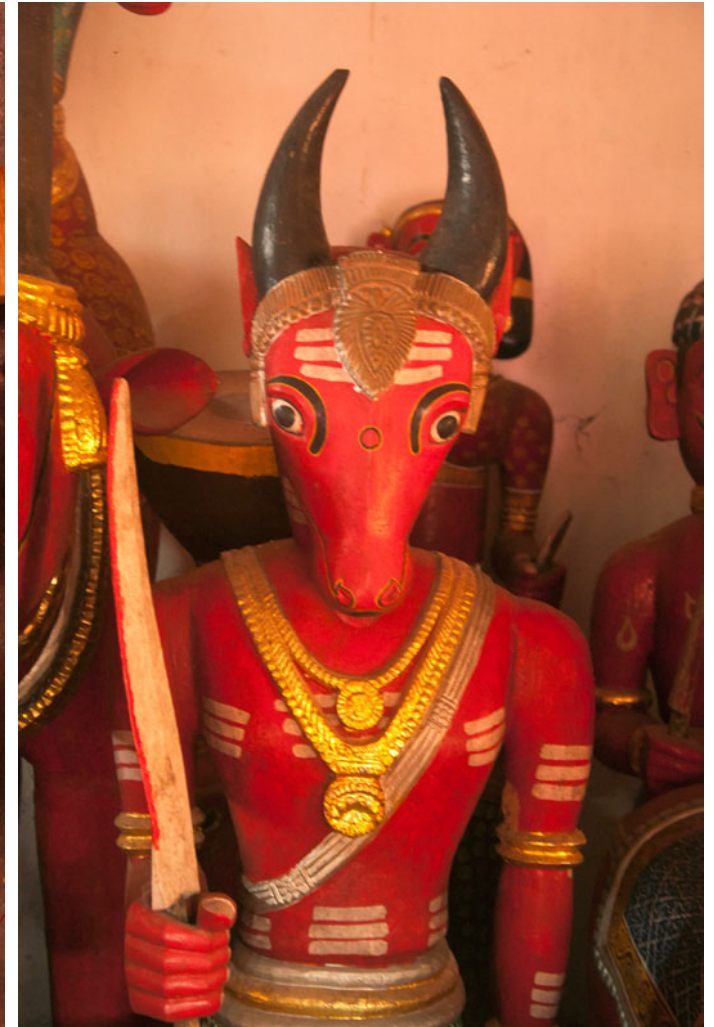
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One of the forms Goddess Parvathi.



One of the forms of Nandi.

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An incarnation form of Lord Shiva.



Saint carved as bootha figures.

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