

Design Resource

Undercut Stone Carving - Varanasi

Beautifully Intricate Carving

by

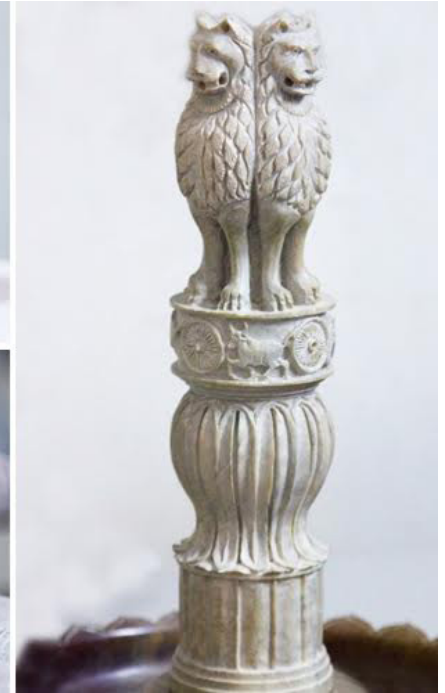
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Sandhya B.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/undercut-stone-carving-varanasi>

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Introduction

The carving of stones is said to be witnessed from a very prehistoric time. The consequence of carving should have been by striking a soft stone with a tougher one. Ancient sculptures were mostly of human forms, latter were found of animals and more abstract forms in stone. The process of accomplishing the sculptures is termed as stone carving. The pieces of natural stones are shaped by the eliminating or chiseling away some parts of stone in a planned way to accomplish a detailed design. Earlier the carvers themselves had to go in search for the right type of the stone. There are various kinds of stone available in which soft stone is preferable for it is easy to carve on soft stone. Sculptors use basic carving tools and hammers. Before beginning to carve there must be a pre-determined design. To brief it up carving happens in three simple steps – roughly chiseling out the stone, shaping and detailing. These three steps also include sandpapering, mounting and finishing. The basic tools that are required are pointed, flat chisels and a hammer. These tools help the carvers attain the form which they visualize. There have been various styles adapted over the period of time while carving. Though the methods of roughing, secondary roughing and finishing remains the results demonstrates the changes that has happened over years of time.

The stone carving at Varanasi is very unique comparing it with other states in India. Carving is preferred on soft stone. The soft stone is also addressed as Gorara locally. Stones are brought from mines of Chunar and Shivpuri – Madhya Pradesh. The most appreciating quality of this stone is that it is available in a wide range of colors and is easy to carve. Bowls, plates and glasses are known products. Earlier before initial stages of carving on soapstone, artists used tusks and sandalwood as their media to carve and as time passed by due government issues they had to take a hold on it. The soapstone when witnessed in the nearby mines were used by the artists to experiment the same designs what they did on tusks in order substitute and to test the production. The result happened to be a good hit later. The artists prefer a clean even shaded stone, for the carving will not be affected by the variations of pigment or by veining. For example, if artisan carved a nice face with a multi – colored stone, the veins would definitely appear either crisscross or dotted, sideways or right on the face, ruining the actual feel of the piece. Since there are less or no chances of veining in a clean or pure stone the piece comes out to its best of the looks. As the working on stone improvised the use of tools or the use of tools got a push to try out more innovative carvings like undercut. The undercut carving is very much known in the north part of India. The most marketed and noted product of this kind is an undercut elephant. A skilled artist can complete an undercut elephant of size two into three inches in two hours. The undercut carving is well known and Varanasi is one of the main centers of stone carving in Uttar Pradesh. Artisans carve variety of products from soap stone. Lamp stands, small bowls, jaalis, candle stands and decorative items.

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Beautifully intricate carving of flower pot.

Stone is carved with help of Chisels tools by using turnery machine.



Artisan giving basic shape to the idol using turnery machine.

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Buddha statue exquisite beauty of the stone craft.



Craftsman is giving detailing to the idol.

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Extreme care is taken to carve fine detailing.



Showcase with inter get carving.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials required for undercut Stone Carving:

- **Power Drill Bit:** Drill bits help to smoothen, give depth and drill holes.
- **The Drill Machine:** The drill machine holds the drilling bits.
- **The Stone Cutting Machine:** The stone is cut to desired shape with the help of stone cutting machine.
- **Compass:** Compass tool helps to measure and mark on the stone to cut.
- **Sandpaper:** The stone is smoothened with the help of sandpaper.
- **Stone:** Soap stone is used to carve.



Block of stone is basic raw material used for stone carving.

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Table drilling machine used for stone carving purpose.



Band saw for cutting purpose.

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Electrical Dremel rotary tool used in carving the stone.

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Calliper tools to measure the products.



Traditional Turning machine.



Defined head for the chisel tools.

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Grinding wheel used for sharpening tools.



Several types of chisels tools used for carving process.



Tool used in Integrate carving.

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Making Process



Bowl Making



Elephant Making

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Bowl Making



Artisan creating a hollow form of the bowl by using turnery machine.



Stone is carved with help of Chisels.



Emery sheet is used to remove rough surface on the bowl.

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Generally 220 grit emery sheet is used.



Hacksaw blade is used to cut the finished product from stalk.



Artisan carefully cuts the bowl.



Final product "Bowl".

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Elephant Making

The undercut carving is observed at Varanasi, one of the main centers of stone carving in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The stones are collected from the mines and stacked. The stones are collected from Jhansi district as well. The stone block is cut with the help of stone cutting machine. The stone depending on what product has to be made, is cut. The length and breadth of the stone are marked with the measuring compass. The stone is cut to the desired length and breadth, rough carving on the block is done in the initial stages. The head part, trunk and feet part of the elephant are all carved and marked in case of an elephant undercut stone carving work. The depth is given, the curve of the trunk, the separation of the feet, smoothening of the body part and the depth for the ears is done during the secondary carvings. Once the body part of the elephant is smoothened or made even, holes are drilled. Engraving bits are used to smoothen and smaller engraving tool helps to drill holes. The holes are drilled leaving even spaces between them. After drilling even holes, it is further drilled through each hole forming a block at the centre. This block is shaped to a baby elephant through the holes that are drilled. The holes become a see through and the baby elephant is visible. With another set of drilling bit designs are made on the body part of the undercut elephant. The designs on the face, body part and the tail are finished. The minute designs are completed and no polishing is required for the undercut elephant carving. The carved and undercut elephant is complete when all the fine detailing is done. Varanasi is one of the main centers where one gets to witness this undercut stone carving process. There are variety of products that can be seen in undercut work.

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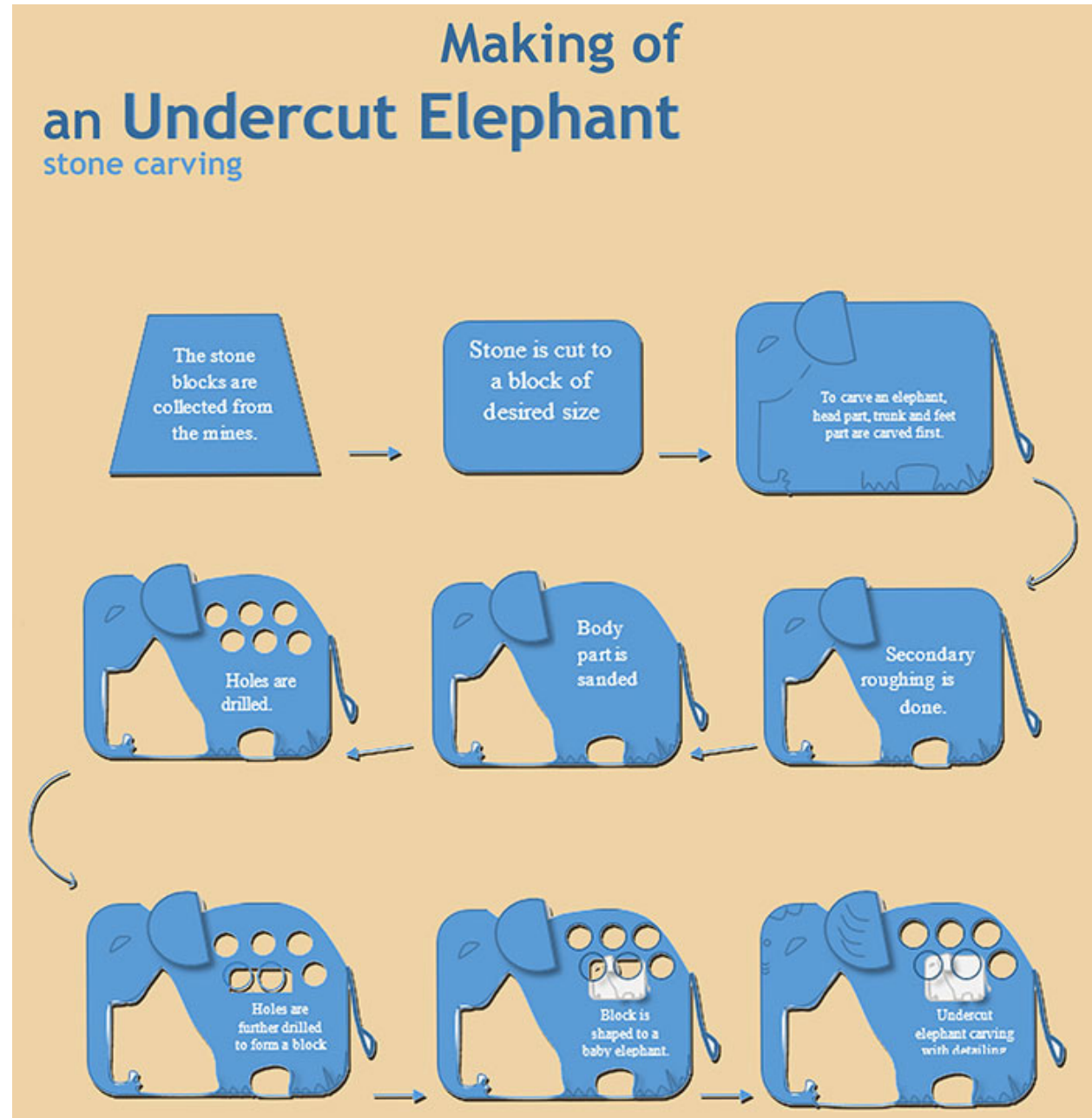
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Flow Chart:



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Artisan starts to carve stone pieces to the basic shape.



The block of stone is roughly shaped by using power carving sharp tools.



Artisan giving basic shape to the idol.



Leg parts is getting carved by using power carving sharp tools.

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Idol is getting carved roughly as per the requirement.



Basic shaped of the elephant idol.



Artisan removing the outer surface of the idol.



After removed the excess stone artisan start work on the detailing.

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Artisan sharpening the chisels tools, using grinding wheel.



After sharpening the tool it will get easy for the detailing carve.



Roughly carved idol is ready for the detailing.



Giving hollow to the idol using sharp chisels tools.

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Pointed carving sharp tools used to enhance the detailing work.



Facial part is getting carved by using carving sharp tools.



Beautifully carved final product is ready by the artisan.

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Products

Undercut stone carving products are made in various sizes and forms. Undercut elephant, camel, lion, sphere, Buddha inside a sphere and owl is seen mostly. The most noted work in undercut stone carving is the undercut elephant. There are decorative like table lamps, lamp stands, bowls, plates and glasses made apart from the undercut technique. The cost of undercut stone carving products range according to its size, intricate designs and time taken to complete the work. The cost starts from two hundred and goes on. The undercut stone carving is an innovative form that the stone carving process has got to witness.



Beautifully carved idol of lion.

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Ornament showcase with inter get carving.



Feng shui luck frog of stone.



Rectangle box with intricate carving of animal.

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Elaborate detailing work on elephant idol inspired by old tridecanal design.



Sculpture of emblem of India, four lion. (one hidden from view)

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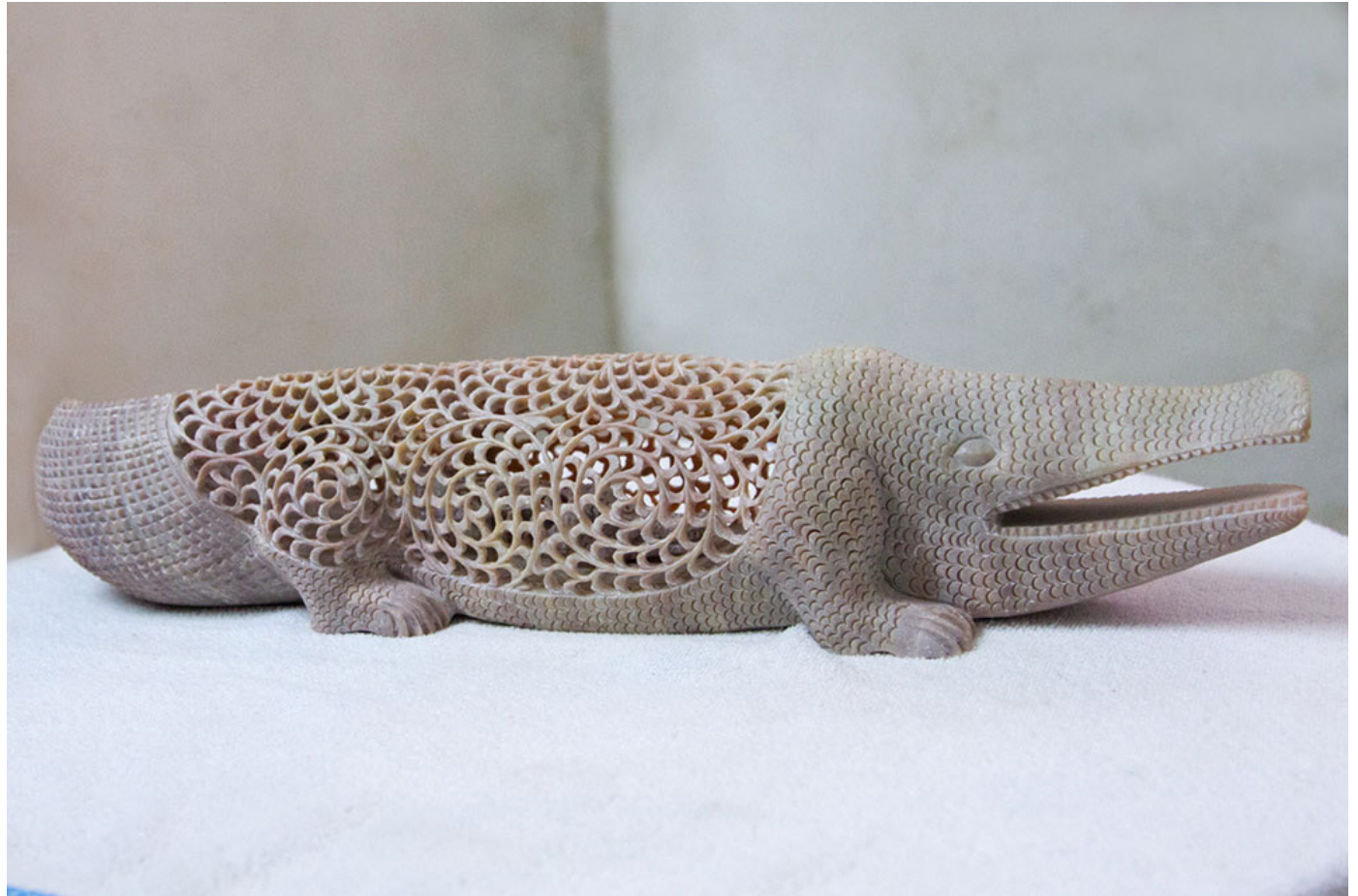
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Crocodile idol of stone.

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