



MAHARASHTRA TOURISM

**Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation,  
Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra**



# Bohada Mask

**Experience Maharashtra's Living Heritage**

# Cultural Tourism Destinations



-  Folk Song & Dance
-  Warli Painting
-  Basketry
-  Folk Instruments
-  Seaside
-  Western Ghats
-  Bohada Mask
-  Dam
-  Fort
-  Water Falls
-  Hot Spring



# Discover the Living Heritage of Maharashtra

Maharashtra is a rich tapestry of culture, where ancient cave carvings exist alongside a vibrant, living tribal heritage. In the districts of Palghar and Nashik, the forested Sahyadri ranges shelter the enduring traditions of the Kokna, Mahadev Koli, and Warli communities.

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) is working in Palghar and Nashik districts to develop Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) based experiential tourism. In partnership with local communities, MTDC invites you to explore these regions as living cultural landscapes. From the delicate storytelling of Warli paintings and the striking Bohada masks to finely crafted bamboo art and soulful music and dance, every tradition reflects a deep connection to the land and its people. This brochure opens a doorway to the sacred villages of the Bohada mask makers.

Step off the usual tourist trail to discover these hidden cultural treasures and meet the tradition bearers themselves. Here, culture is not something to watch—it is something to experience, shared warmly where people, place, and tradition come together to reveal the living soul of Maharashtra.





## The Sacred Sohang: More than a Mask

The Bohada mask is a sacred vessel of transformation for the Kokna and Warli communities. When a performer wears the mask, known as a Songa, it marks a spiritual threshold where the human self recedes and the deity is believed to emerge and walk among the villagers. This ritual theatre, sustained for centuries, revolves around the “Sohang” masks—a set of 52 distinct characters forming a rich mythological universe.

Traditionally crafted from heavy wood or cured leather, the masks later evolved into a more practical yet artistic form using papier-mâché. Mask-makers create them with a base of clay and recycled paper pulp, bound with natural forest gums, shaping detailed features over half-spherical moulds. The final masks are lightweight, durable, and vividly painted. Often preserved for generations, each mask becomes a revered family heirloom, connecting the present community with its ancestral past.





## The Heartland of the Tradition

The Bohada tradition is strongest in these villages:

**Pimpalsond** is a village in **Nashik district** and a key centre for Bohada mask-making and ritual performances.

**Ramkhind (Jawhar Taluka)** and **Mokhada (Mokhada Taluka)** are villages in Palghar district and are considered the birthplace of the Bohada tradition, deeply rooted in the region's cultural history.

These villages also offer beautiful landscapes, forest walks, and opportunities to interact with local communities.



Shivram Ganga Chaudhari (left) is a famous Bohada mask maker from Pimpalsond, known for preserving the tradition across generations.

## Guardians of the Ancestral Mask

The Kokna and Warli artists are the custodians of a tradition where masks are wrapped in cloth and preserved as family treasures for generations—some, like the Ghuba Devi mask, are believed to be over 200 years old.

# The Mythological Landscape

The Masks represent faces of Gods, Guardians & Legends

Visitors will encounter masks representing:

- Jagdamba Mata – the central goddess and symbol of victory over evil
- Ganpati – remover of obstacles and protector of beginnings
- Waghoba (Tiger God) – guardian of forests and villages
- Hanuman – forest protector and ancestral hero
- Hidimba and Mahisasur – powerful figures symbolizing challenges and chaos

Each mask has its own story, character, and significance, which local artists and elders are happy to explain.



## The Ritual Procession

Bohada means “procession,” symbolizing creation and the community’s role in sustaining life. Seven days before the festival, families sow rice in small baskets and later offer the seedlings to the Gaon Devi as a prayer for rain and a good harvest.

Each mask arrives with rhythmic processions of Sambal drums and Kahali and Tutari trumpets, all handcrafted from natural materials. Preserved as family heirlooms by Kokna and Warli households, the masks embody ancestral bonds. The festival culminates in a grand procession celebrating Jagdamba Mata’s victory over Ravana—affirming unity and the triumph of good over evil.

# The Process

The creation of a Bohada mask is a meticulous process of layering and molding:



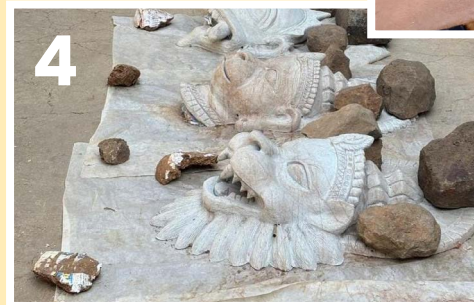
**1**  
**Moulding:** Artists prepare a half-spherical mould using local mud and clay.



**2**  
**Layering:** Strips of paper and paper pulp are layered over the mould using a locally extracted natural gum adhesive.



**3**  
**Shaping:** The distinctive features of gods and demons—are hand-sculpted while the pulp is wet.



**4**  
**Drying & Polishing:** After the mask dries to a wood-like consistency, the surface is smoothed and treated to prepare for pigmentation.



**5**  
**Painting:** Using bright, smooth colors, the artist breathes life into the character, paying obeisance to the mask before its first performance.



# The Evolution of the Craft

While the masks remain central to village rituals, the artists have adapted their skills to create aesthetic masterpieces for the modern world.

**Wall Art:** Miniature replicas of the 52 Sohang masks for interior décor.

**Figurines:** Intricate paper-mâché figures of tribal dancers and deities.

**Modern Personalities:** Masks depicting renowned historical and contemporary figures, showcasing artistic innovation.





## A Living Museum of Palghar

As you explore the cultural landscape, begin your journey at the MTDC Palghar Lok Itihas Sangrahalaya—a living museum located in Gholwad village, Dahanu taluka, Palghar. Set within a restored 1880s school building, the museum offers a compelling introduction to the region's rich heritage. Its collection showcases the creative traditions of the area, including Bohada masks, Warli art, bamboo crafts, Tarpa music, and other performing arts, alongside everyday artifacts generously contributed by local residents.



## Celebrating Continuity

The first edition of Nashik's ICH Festival was held across the art and craft villages of Surgana—Shribhuvan Chinchpada and its surrounding hamlets, along with Pimpalsond—celebrating community traditions, local artists, and the culture of the soil. Building on this vibrant foundation.

### Upcoming ICH festivals

Surgana, Nashik - 2-4 October, 2026  
Jawhar, Palghar - 3-4 October, 2026



## Navigate & Connect

Easily accessible from Mumbai by road and rail. Nearest railway stations are Nashik Road and Valsad. Surgana taluka is 95km from Nashik Road and 90km from Valsad. Drive through Surgana's western ghats to reach Pimpalsond (Bohada mask village).

### Nearby Experiences

While visiting Bohada villages, travelers can also explore:

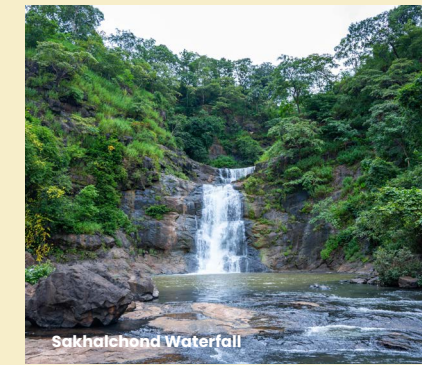
- Hatgad fort - Hand-built by the foot soldiers of Shivaji Maharaja
- Sakhalchond Waterfall - just 1 km from Pimpalsond
- Taptapani - Hot springs and temples linked to Ramayana legends
- Tribal music and dance performances in nearby villages like Shribhuvan Chinchpara, Dolhare, Wangan and Galibari.

### Artist Contacts

Shivram Chaudhari - 7588486110  
Ratan Chaudhari - 9423070792  
Deepak Chaudhari - 7262870513



Hatgad fort



Sakhalchond Waterfall



Taptapani



## Explore Bohada Mask

Visit mask making villages to engage directly with artists through hands-on mask making sessions, immersive craft residencies, and collaborative product development initiatives. Discover pathways for sustainable design innovation grounded in material knowledge, ecological responsibility, and lived craft traditions.

For designers, architects, and buyers:


- Co-create Bohada products and spatial installations
- Source handcrafted souvenirs and décor objects
- Participate in artisan-led Bohada workshops




Scan to know more



 Explore Maharashtra - MTDC

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