

Kashi Grass

Weaving Nature, Sustaining Lives

Nimdih | Seraikela Kharsawan | Jharkhand



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The notion of education through handicrafts rises from the contemplation of truth and love permeating life's activities.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Roots to Prosperity



'Roots to Prosperity' is a transformative journey led by Contact Base and supported by Axis Bank Foundation. The initiative aspires to empower traditional cultural practitioners as confident cultural entrepreneurs, while strengthening the ecosystem of heritage-based tourism. It works across the districts of Koraput and Mayurbhanj in Odisha, and Seraikela-Kharsawan in Jharkhand—regions endowed with natural beauty and deep reservoirs of indigenous artistry and living traditions.

Across these culturally rich landscapes, the project walks alongside more than 5,500 rural creative practitioners. It supports them to refine skills, access markets directly, build strong community-led enterprises, and shape vibrant cultural tourism experiences. At its core, the initiative recognises that culture is more than memory—it is identity, dignity, and possibility.

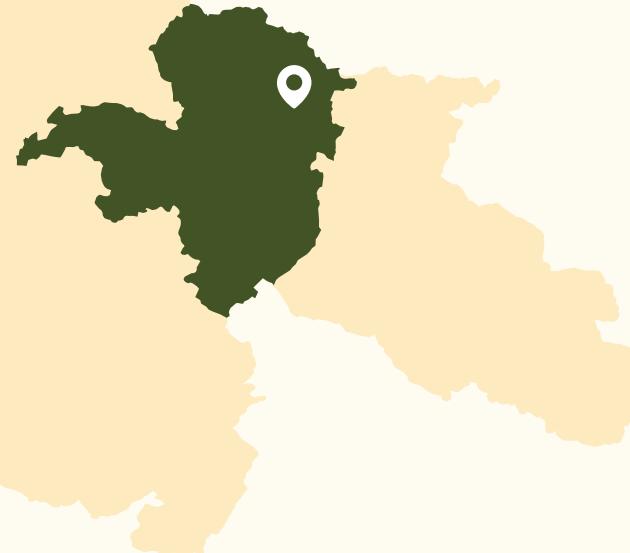
By strengthening grassroots creative economies, Roots to Prosperity fosters inclusive growth, sustainable livelihoods, and resilient communities. The initiative seeks to affirm culture as a pathway to empowerment – where inherited wisdom nurtures confidence, resilience, and a more secure future for communities.

This brochure presents Kashi grass, the sustainable craft tradition that highlights the exquisite craftsmanship of the artists of Seraikela Kharsawan.



About the craft

Kashi Grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*) is a fast-growing perennial grass found naturally along forest edges in Seraikela Kharsawan district of Jharkhand, especially after the monsoon. It can grow up to 3 meters tall and has strong roots that help prevent soil erosion and support the local ecosystem. The stems are thin but sturdy, with narrow leaves that move easily in the wind. This eco-friendly, biodegradable grass is mostly collected by women, who wash it, sun-dry it, and bundle it for craftwork or sale. Because it is abundant, renewable, and low-impact, Kashi Grass is an ideal material for sustainable products. Its use in handmade crafts not only preserves traditional skills but also supports women-led rural livelihoods and contributes to a greener economy.



Location

Located in the foothills of the Nimdih block in Seraikela Kharsawan district, the villages of Rajagora, Bhangat and Ketunga—and to a lesser extent, Samanpur—are known for their beautiful Kashi grass products. Surrounded by forests and rich vegetation, these villages have become active centers for crafting eco-friendly items from locally available Kashi grass.

Block: Nimdih

District: Seraikela Kharsawan



Village: Rajagora, Bhangat, Ketunga

How to reach: Nestled in the heart of Jharkhand, Nimdih is easily accessible by road— just a short drive from Tatanagar (46 km) and Purulia (90 km). Nimdih Railway Station is 5 km away from Rajagora and Bhangat, and 1 km from Ketunga. Well-connected yet off the beaten path, it welcomes travellers seeking art, culture, and calm.

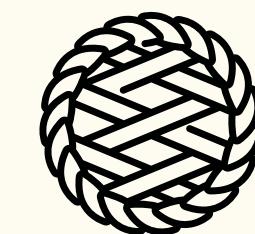




The Makers

In the quiet villages of Rajagora and Bhangat, the Sabar tribe carries forward a deep-rooted tradition of Kashi grass weaving. Their artisanal goods reflect a deep understanding of local ecology and aesthetics, and offer a sustainable livelihood option to forest-dependent communities.

The craft is vibrant and evolving, led primarily by women. Their work reflects not just skill but a strong relationship with their environment—turning wild, natural resources into finely crafted, eco-conscious designs that carry the simplicity and strength of their makers.



Banamali Sabar
Biswanath Sabar
Sumitra Sabar
Ranghu Sabar
Srimoti Sabar
Naresh Sabar

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Process

Kashi grass is collected locally from riverbanks and fallow fields once it dries naturally, especially during the post-monsoon season.

The grass is thoroughly washed to remove mud, insects, and debris. It is then sun-dried for 2–3 days. Proper drying prevents mold and adds strength to the fibre. Before weaving, it is softened by soaking in water to increase flexibility. The dried stalks are sorted and bundled for ease of handling and future use.

Depending on the type of product, the grass and palm leaves may be left in their natural shades or eco-friendly dyed to bring vibrancy and visual richness. Using traditional hand techniques, the artisans interlace Kashi Grass with date palm strips in spiral or coiled patterns. Kashi grass is woven with the help of date palm leaves and cotton yarn or wool. The materials are hand-woven together, and designs are often enhanced with colour to add decorative motifs. Once woven, the items are trimmed and extra edges are carefully removed.



Collection



Sorting



Cutting



Dyeing



Weaving/Coiling

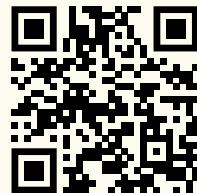


Finishing the products

Products

Kashi grass craft combines Kashi grass with date palm leaves to create handmade products that are both useful and attractive. Traditionally, artisans made strong baskets, trays, storage boxes, and containers for daily use.

Today, the craft has adapted to modern needs. Artisans now make lamp shades, planters, wall plates, decorative trays, and other multi-functional items that suit eco-friendly interiors. With a mix of traditional techniques and modern design, Kashi grass products offer sustainable, aesthetic, and well-crafted alternatives to mass-produced décor, making them promising for both urban and global markets.



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Baskets and containers



Lampshades



Kashi Grass | Seraikela Kharsawan



Wall Plates



Roots to Prosperity

Contact Base has partnered with Axis Bank Foundation on the "Roots to Prosperity" project to enhance culture-based livelihoods of artists in Seraikela Kharsawan.



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