

Kotpad

Handloom

Dyeing with Roots, Weaving with Soul

Koraput | Odisha



A good life is like weaving. Energy is created in the tension. The struggles, the pull and the tug are everything.

— Joan Erikson

(American author, educator, craftsperson and choreographer)

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.

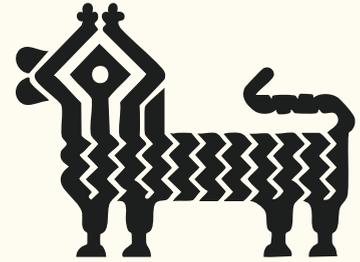
This brochure presents Kotpad handloom tradition, highlighting the exquisite craftsmanship of the artists of Koraput.





Kotpad Handloom | Koraput

The Kotpad Legacy



Where Nature Dyes and Heritage Weaves

The Mirgan weaver community of Koraput has preserved a textile tradition that is both spiritual and sustainable. Known for its use of natural dyes, symbolic motifs the Kotpad handloom weaves reflect a life deeply intertwined with the cycles of the earth. The craft's beauty lies in its simplicity: earthy maroon drawn from the root of Aal tree (Aachhu Gachi), motifs inspired by forest life and tribal identity, and patterns that speak of kinship, ritual, and balance.

Every Kotpad textile, soft and breathable, embodies the soul of tribal Odisha. It carries a Geographical Indication (GI) tag and continues to represent India's living heritage of natural dyeing and handloom excellence.

Location



Kotpad is a vibrant town located in the Kotpad Block of Koraput district, Odisha, known for its rich handloom heritage and tribal cultural traditions. It lies about 5 km from the Tehsil office and approximately 72 km from Koraput, the district headquarters. Presently there are around 15 weavers in the municipality areas but in other villages there are many weavers who supply to weavers in Kotpad. The region is surrounded by several weaving village clusters such as Bhansuli (62 km from Kotpad, 87 km from Koraput) and Dungriguda (58 km west of Koraput), which together form an important network of traditional weaving communities. Kotpad NAC, along with the villages of Bhansuli and Dungriguda has been identified with approximate 108 beneficiary weavers.

Block: Kotpad

District: Koraput



Villages: Kotpad, Bhansuli, Dungriguda



How To Reach

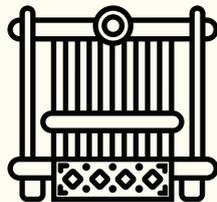
The closest railway station to reach Kotpad is Jagdalpur. The nearest airports are at Jeypore (50 kms from Kotpad), Jagdalpur (33 kms from Kotpad) and Visakhapatnam (about 285 kms from Kotpad), offering convenient access from major cities. Regular buses and taxis connect Kotpad with nearby towns like Rayagada, Nabarangpur, and Jagdalpur.



The Makers

Kotpad's weavers are storytellers, dyers, and custodians of cultural memory. The Mirgan and Tanti communities are the traditional bearers of the craft, once weaving the Patta fabric for Bhatra, Durua, Paraja, Madia, and Koya tribes.

Generations later, this artistry endures through the hands of Padma Shree Gobardhan Panika, Kapileswar Mohanto, and Bidyadhar Mohanto, whose looms continue to hum with the pulse of heritage. For every artist, weaving is both livelihood and language – a means of sustaining the family, honouring the ancestors, and colouring the future with pride.



Padma Shree Gobardhan Panika: 9938294630
Kapileswar Mohanto: 9937654010
Bidyadhar Mohanto : 7978088376
Nabin Kumar Panika: 6371969124
Bharat Sira: 8456888971
Baidyanath Samrat: 7855923870
Sridhar Tanti: 8018968998

Process

1 Yarn Preparation

Threads are first washed, soaked, and squeezed to remove excess water. They are then treated with heated castor oil (Jara Tel in Odia), about 3–4 kg per bundle, applied evenly by hand. After dipping again in water and drying for 30 minutes, the threads develop their characteristic musty smell. (Castor oil improves colour absorption, flexibility, and thread strength).

Next, a semi-thick mixture of cow dung and water—around 30–40 kg per bundle—is applied by hand. The threads are then dried twice over 15 days. (Cow dung acts as a natural mordant, enhancing dye absorption and colour fastness).



2 Dye Process

Red colour

A | Preparation of Dye Solution

The roots of the Aal tree (known as Achu Gachi in Odia) are used to produce Aal powder, traditionally measured using a pot. This powder is mixed into a haandi (earthen pot) filled with hot water to create the dyeing solution.



B | Dyeing the Yarns

Yarns are then dipped into this mixture and left to dry in sunlight for 24 hours. The following morning, the yarns are reheated and dried again.



C | Ash Water Treatment

Wood ash is placed in an earthen haandi and filled with water. Once the ash settles, the water is transferred to another haandi and heated. This water is then sprinkled on the threads and they are squeezed using legs.

D | Repetition

Yarns are then dipped into this mixture and left to dry in sunlight for 24 hours. The following morning, the yarns are reheated and dried again.

Black colour

To achieve a natural black dye, a combination of Aal (extracted from the roots of the Aal tree, known locally as Achu Gachi), Harad (Myrobalan), and Heerakashi (Ferrous Sulphate) is traditionally used.



In some variations of the process, a simpler combination of Aal and Heerakashi (Ferrous Sulphate) alone is used, which can still result in a black colour.



3 Weaving

A | The hank of yarn is stretched and set into the winding wheel. This tool is called 'Bharani' by the weavers. The yarn hank is set around the bharani and then transferred into another tool (for warp and weft).



Bharani

B | Then yarns are transferred from the bharani to a wooden frame called 'Pawan'. Each turn represents 1 metre of fabric, and each frame can accommodate up to 7 metres; weavers can set a maximum of 7 metres for a single warp. The hollow bamboo stick separates the warp threads to keep them even and avoid intertangling during weaving. The stick is called 'Purni'. It keeps the tension of the yarn uniform.



Pawan

Purni



Warp threads pass through heald eyes and reed gaps

C | The weaver prepares the warp yarns, and individual threads are pulled through each heald eye and dent gap in the reed. The metal reed is called 'Faani'. The end of each yarns attaches with the previous left-out yarn end to the rod that fits on the loom. Ash is used to fuse the ends of the yarn.

D | The warp threads are first treated with starch to prevent breakage and add strength to the yarn. During the beaming stage of warping, a broom is used to ensure that the threads are evenly set onto the loom's back beam while removing any excess starch. Once the warp is ready, the beam is mounted onto the loom. All pit looms feature a curved pole at the end opposite the weaver to help steady the warp.



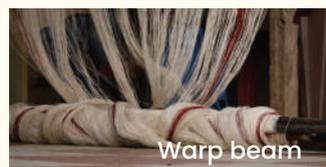
Broom



Adding starch



Beaming



Warp beam



Curved pole

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E | The yarn of the bharani is transferred onto this stick with a thick ringed end called 'Tossar'. The yarn from here will be later transferred into the shuttles.



Tossar



Preparing Weft



Shuttle



F | Lastly, weaving is initiated with a plain weave, and motifs are created using extra weft— additional set of threads inserted between the regular horizontal weft threads to form patterns through the skilled work of the weaver's hands.

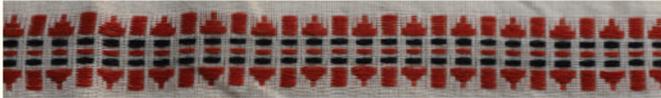


Weaving



Creating extra weft motifs

Weaving Motifs



Oncha-lines



Dancing girl



Deer



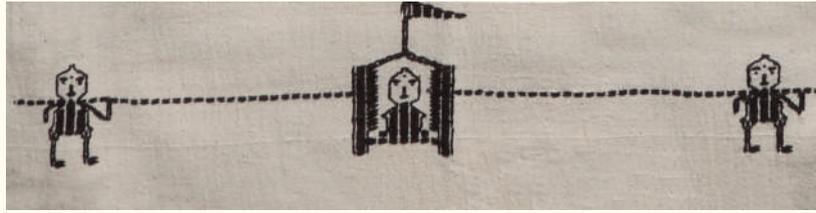
Lion



Elephant



Geometric motifs



Tribal figures



Types of birds



Umbrella



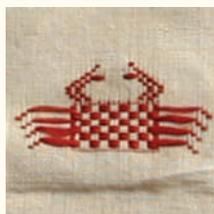
Matka



Fish



Tortoise



Crab



Temple

Products

Kotpad product range features handloom sarees, stoles, and yardages, each intricately woven with motifs inspired by nature and tribal life. Among these, the sarees stand out as the most iconic, distinguished by their temple borders and unique designs. In addition, the range includes the traditional 8 haath textiles such as Womens' pata, angocha and tuvaal, which are commonly used for men's tribal attire, worn during special tribal occasions. Each textile embodies the region's artisanal heritage and symbolic artistry, making it both meaningful and visually distinctive.



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**Durua Tribe of Koraput wearing
traditional Kotpad textiles**

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Stole



Stole



Saree



Saree

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Stole



Dresses, Tops and Trousers

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Yardage



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 Koraput.



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