



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal



Going Green with
SABAI



A society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy.

John C. Sawhill

*President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy and the
12th President of New York University*

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West Bengal is a treasure trove of natural and cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage of Bengal is an exemplary instance of the aesthetic lineage of Bengal. Utilitarian lifestyle items like basketry made with date palm leaves and Sabai grass, hand spun and hand woven jute rugs (Dhokra), mats made with cane slips (Sitalpati) or Madurkathi (Madur), pottery, Kantha-spreads, decorative and ritualistic items made out of Shola and others, reflect a curious fusion of indigenous craftsmanship and utility. Bengal's art and craft reflect cultural history, ethnic roots, and lifestyle in-tune with nature. Variety of masks, Dokra and metal work, range of indigenous weaves and embroideries, dolls, masks and figurines curved out of wood are examples of Bengal's artistry. Culture of Bengal is enriched by the mellifluous tunes of the Baul, Bhawaiya, Bhatiyali singers, rapturous dances of Chau, Raibenshe and Jhumur, storytelling traditions like puppetry and Patachitra, and folk theatres like Gambhira, Banbibir Pala among other folk forms.

The Rural Craft and Cultural Hub (RCCH) Project is an initiative of the Department of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T) and UNESCO aiming to rejuvenate the rich cultural heritage of West Bengal and strengthen rural creative enterprise. The journey started in 2013 and the RCCH project currently covers 50,000 handicraft and folk artists across the state. It has strengthened the ecosystem supporting the transmission of traditional skills in art and craft, fostered direct market linkage, engaged youth in pursuing their traditions, and promoted cultural tourism to the villages of the artists. The project is indeed a testimonial to the contribution of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to sustainable development, social inclusion and also to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

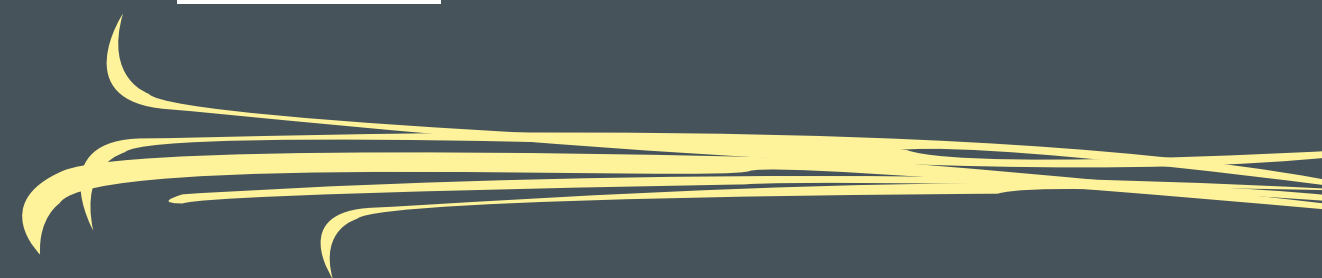




SABAI

The Wonder Grass

Sabai is a grass that grows in abundance in the districts of Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram in the state of West Bengal. It is known for its smoothness and strength. Women belonging to communities living in forest fringe areas of the three districts are weaving a wide range of products with this natural fibre that are eco-friendly and nontoxic, thereby strengthening the foundations of a green economy and the consumption of green products. Sabai today is a glimmering ray of hope for these women because it has all the promise of empowering them and reducing migration of women to cities for work. As part of its agenda to promote green skills for integrated and inclusive rural development, RCCH project is providing comprehensive training and direct market linkage to 5000 Sabai artists across Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram.





Category: Sabai is one of the finest natural fibres of India

Botanical name: *Eulaliopsis Binata*

Family: Poaceae (Grass family)

Nature: A tufted perennial grass with basal sheaths

Local Name: Babui Ghash

Regions where it is grown: Forest fringe areas of Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram districts in West Bengal



Sabai:

Transforming Lives in the Forest Fringe Areas

The intervention by West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board (WBKVIB) and then under RCCH triggered a life-changing journey for the Sabai weavers of Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram. Traditionally, women made ropes from Sabai grass and sold them in local markets. But keeping pace with changing times and new demand for natural products, they are now making diverse utility items, like trays and baskets, mats and coasters, boxes and folders, bags, bins, containers, and lamp shades. Leaving behind a life steeped in abject poverty and hopelessness, they are now self-sufficient and optimistic, with a marked improvement in income and living standards.

PROCESS



Making ropes from the grass

- The grass is reaped, dried and made into bundles.
- The grass is sorted according to its length and quality.
- Turning grass into ropes
 - The grass is twisted manually into ropes.
 - Alternatively it is passed through a twisting machine.
 - The rough edges are removed by rubbing on tree-trunks.
 - The ropes are then arranged in bundles.

Developing the braids

- The grass is twisted for braiding.
- Rough edges are cut and hammered to make them smooth.
- The smoothened braids are ready for use.



Dyeing grass for making colourful products

- The grass, ropes and braids are dyed as required.
- Water is boiled and the dye is mixed with water.
- The grass/ropes/braids are soaked in the water for 15-20 minutes.
- The coloured grass/ropes/braids are washed thoroughly. The dyed fibre is laid out to dry, to be used in making finished products

Different Processes Involved in Sabai weaving

Region-wise, there are different processes followed in Sabai weaving:

1. In Bankura and Purulia, Sabai grass and palm leaves are twined together to create a range of products.
2. In Jhargram, braids are intertwined to make bags, bins and trays.
3. In parts of Bankura, looms are used to make items like folders & lamp shades



SABAI HUBS

PURULIA

Mrigichami and Rajagram are adjacent tiny villages of Purulia district. Both of these villages have small agricultural land. Life was harsh for ages. But today, many women from the village are engaged in making Sabai handicrafts and also combining Sabai and date palm leaves to weave wonders infused with aesthetic intricacy. The women make a range of innovative utility items of high market value like trays and baskets, mats and coasters, boxes and folders, bags, bins, containers, and lamp shades. The other prominent villages practicing Sabai craft are Satara, Karu, Udalbani, Golkata in Bandwan and Paisagora, Gawalapara in Manbazar. There are 200 women practicing in Paisagora who are from indigenous communities like Santhals and Sabars. Sabai weaving has transformed the lives of these women residing in forest fringe areas and given them an avenue to establish themselves as artists and run their own craft enterprise.

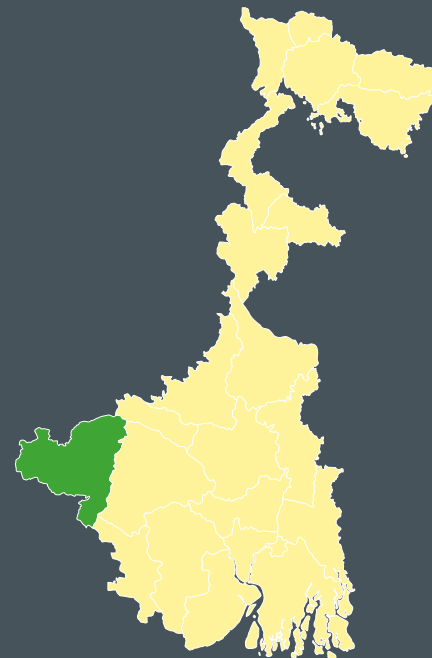


Total no. of artists:

Bankura - 1095

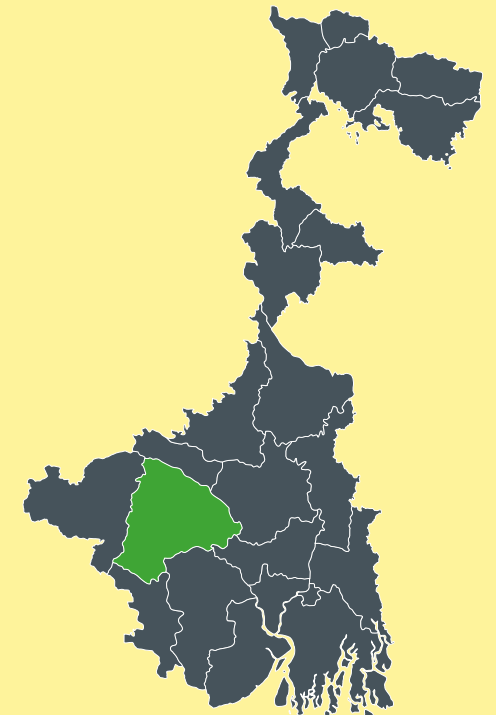
Jhargram - 1393

Purulia - 2244



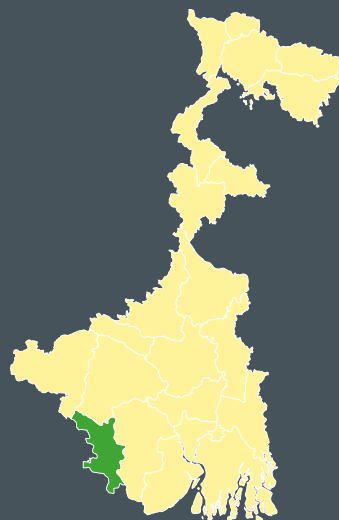
BANKURA

Mukutmanipur is a popular tourist location on the bank of Kangsabati River, which passes through dense forests and hills. Ranibandh and Khatra located around the region are known for Sabai weaving. Sabai and date palm leaves are being woven together here to create attractive products. Mahisamura, a hamlet inside a thick forest in Raotora Gram Panchayat of Ranibandh block, has also grown to be an active hub of Sabai weavers. Rich in natural beauty, it is home to many Sabai artists. They too were dependent on agriculture that gave minimal returns. Although Sabai grows in abundance in the region, they knew only one use of it in the past — to make ropes. But with time and support of expert guidance, the community members are now weaving a range of innovative products of high market value using Sabai grass.



JHARGRAM

Chandabila, Narda, Raisole and Punnapani villages under Chandabila Gram Panchayat in Nayagram block of Jhargram district are surrounded by dense forests on all sides and have grown to be vibrant hubs of Sabai artists. There are two tourist attractions in the region: Valmiki Tapoban and Rameshwar temple. The Sabai weavers of Jhargram are now also making attractive, utilitarian products that are being sold across India. Mridula Mahato, Jharna Patar, Pratima Mahato, Kakoli Shaw, Kalyani Mahato, Bharati Dutta are some of the leading Sabai weavers of the region.



Centre of Excellence at Jhargram:

WBKVIB has set up a Centre of Excellence (CoE) to further enhance creative practices with sal and sabai at Jhargram. The centre is run by Aranya Sundari Mahila Mahasangha, a Self Help Group (SHG) federation of the district. The centre provides the SHGs of different villages with a direct sale option to the CoE and the SHG federation then sells the product to different buyers. The Center also promotes research and development and overall empowerment of women artists. A Sabai museum is also built at the centre. Rural artists are provided with regular training on upgradation of their craft practices in this Centre of Excellence.



ARTISTS

Purulia

Dipali Mura	9907026586
Ashima Tantubai	9749173911
Baby Munda	9382716921
Niyati Singh	9476461696
Sima Murmu	9748195166

Jhargram

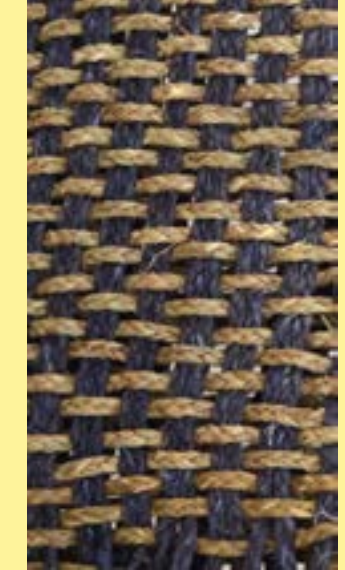
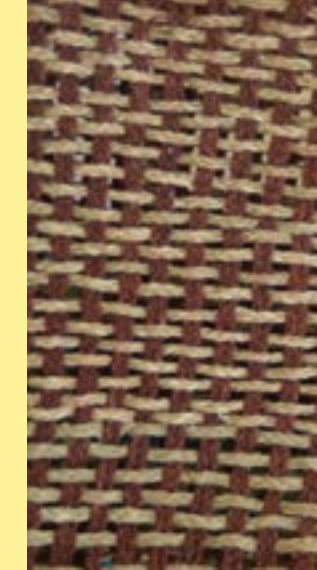
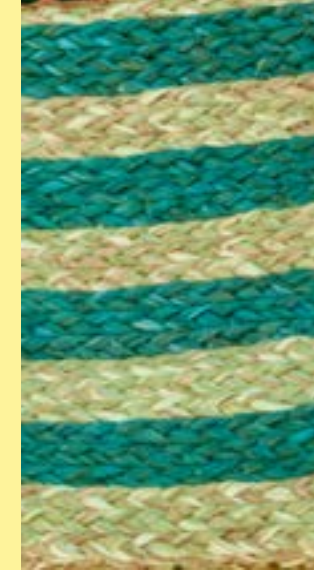
Hiralal Mahato	9064542734
Mridula Mahato	9064542734
Bharati Dutta	8944018298
Kakoli Shaw	6295683992
Jharna Patra	8116911633
Pratima Mahato	7029452147
Kalyani Mahato	6296136771
Rekha Mahato	9547767078

Bankura

Jolly Sardar	8145669144
Srabani Tati	9564486154
Chobi Karmakar	8695219531



WEAVES & PATTERNS



PRODUCTS



Home Decor

Wall Decor



Bags & Accessories



Tableware





INNOVATIONS







 LivingHeritageofEasternIndia | NaturallyBengal
SabaiSangbad | purulialokoshilpo

 livingheritage_easternindia



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