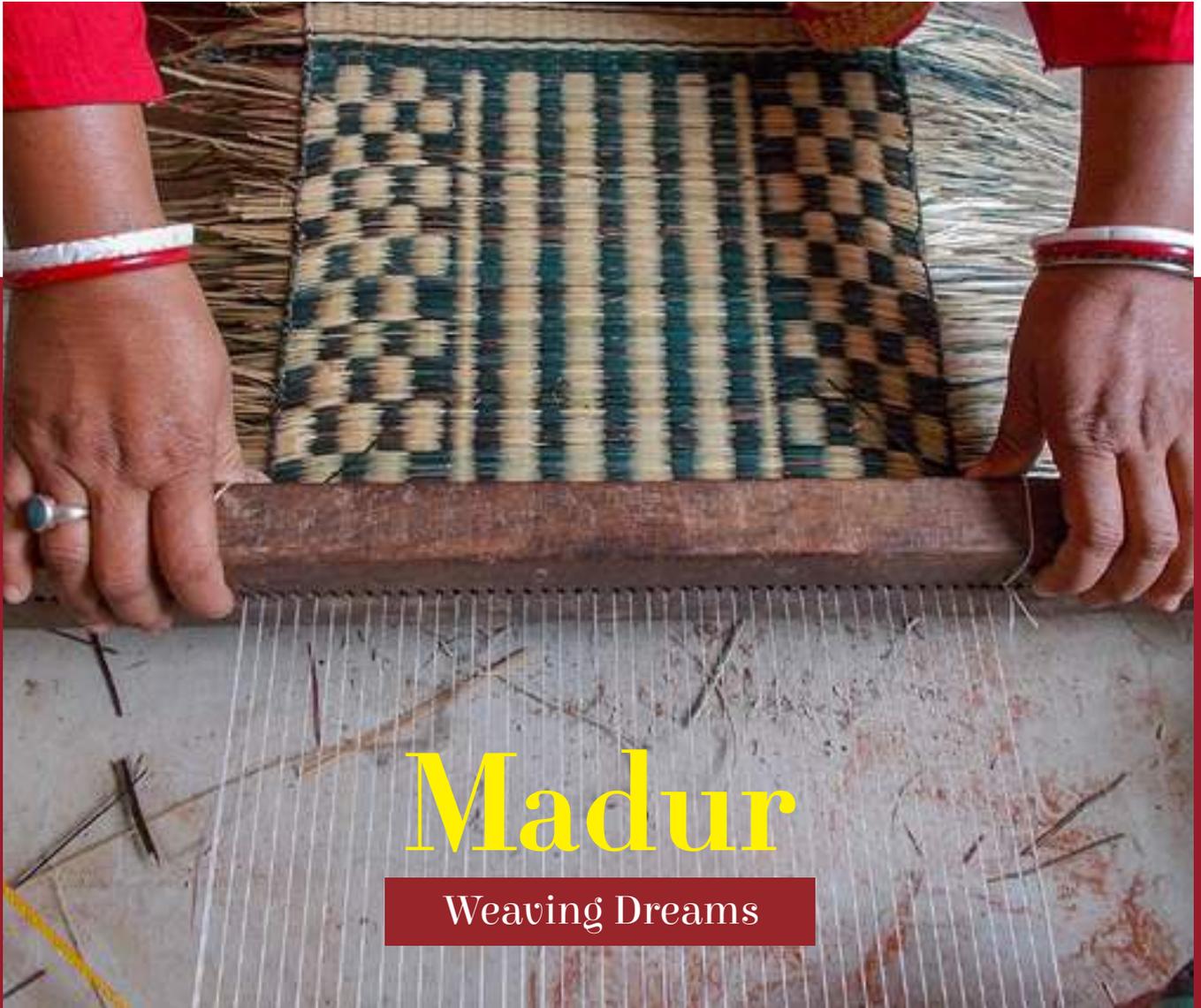




Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal



Madur

Weaving Dreams



Art is not just a handicraft. It is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.

Leo Tolstoy

Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



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).





Madur

A herbaceous plant which grows in marshy land in southern and eastern India is used for making exquisite mats called 'Madur.' These mats are essential for places which have a hot and humid climate, as they are non-conductive and sweat absorbing. Floor mats made out of Madur are used for a variety of decorative and utilitarian purposes. Typically, the women of the households are involved in weaving this beautiful craft.



History of Masland: The Finest Madur

The origin of Madur weaving in West Bengal dates back to the Islamic period, when 'Masland' mats of superfine variety with fine cotton as weft were produced under royal patronage. Mats were collected as revenue for the Jaigirdari system. In 1744, Nawab Alibardi Khan issued a charter to the Jaigirdars in this regard, and as a result, it was obligatory to supply 'Masland' mats for use in the collectorate. With the passage of time, the tradition of Madur weaving has evolved, and the weavers now, along with producing mats, are coming up with a range of diversified products.

**Varieties of Madur:
Ek-hara and *Do-hara* mats**

There are different kinds of mats such as *Ek-hara* or single mats, *Do-hara* or double mats, and the fine quality Madur called the Masland. *Do-hara* is a thicker variant of Madur than the thinner *Ek-hara* Madur. The Masland mat is very fine textured and made of carefully selected reeds with beautiful geometric designs woven on it.

Different motifs used in Madur weaving:



Diamond pattern



Honey comb pattern



Rhomboidal



Cascading pattern



Process



Pre-loom preparation

The crafting of the mat begins with the preparation of basic raw material which is commonly termed as 'pre-loom preparation.' The Madurkathi cultivation is done on swampy land. When the reed grows up to 4 to 5 feet, it is cut just above the ground leaving a tiny part of it for its re-growth. From each of the stalks, 4 to 8 strips can be prepared by discarding the soft inner tissue. The strips are further processed by soaking in water to make them soft. Before weaving, the reeds are dried under the sun. Then, the mats are woven, either on the loom or by hand. Cotton and silk threads are also used to weave the mats. Diamond or spread patterns are woven in the mats.

Dyeing of Madur

The crafts persons colour the Madur sticks with different kinds of dyes. The process consists of cutting the sticks, making appropriate bunches, mixing colors and adding to boiling water, soaking the sticks in boiling water with dye, and then drying them in the sun.



Process of developing loom based products

With the RCCH project support, the weavers are now making a range of diversified products, including table mats, bags, purses, boxes, folders, files, wall hangings, curtains, table runners, jackets, pen holders, etc.

The soaked and dried sticks are made finer by shearing with teeth during the time of weaving. The sticks are occasionally dyed using naturally extracted colours from leaves, locally known as *Rangchita*. Cotton thread is used as the warp. The time taken to make a *Mataranchi* varies from 2 weeks to about 3 months depending on factors like the fineness of the sticks, the number of warp threads per inch, and the intricacy of the design.





Handicraft Cluster

Madur craft is the handcrafted tradition and pride of the Medinipur region in West Bengal. Madur artists are located in 15 blocks of Paschim and Purba Medinipur. As part of the West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board initiative, the clusters of Madur crafts have been strengthened in Sabang, Pingla and Narayangarh of Paschim Medinipur and in Ramnagar, Bhagawanpur areas of Purba Medinipur. The clusters were then integrated under the RCCH initiative of Department of MSME&T and UNESCO.

Sabang is the main hub of Madur. Sarta village in Sabang is known for award winning artists and important Madur units. Kholaberia in Purba Medinipur is also known for making masland variety of products.

Production Cluster
<i>Paschim Medinipur</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabang • Pingla • Narayangarh
<i>Purba Medinipur</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramnagar • Bhagawanpur



Madur of Bengal has been accredited with the GI status in 2018



Documentary: Madur Mahima



Women empowerment through Madur weaving

Three women, Mithurani Jana, Gourirani Jana and Gouri Bala Das, are excellent Madur weavers and their aesthetic intricacy has been recognized by awarding them with the President's Award. Paschim Medinipur's Sarta village in Sabang Block is the abode to these Madur weavers. Intricate in their craft, these three women have taken the art of Madur weaving to new heights. Their flawless skills have given birth to finest quality of Madurs with traditional and contemporary motifs woven into them. These women have become icons of success and inspire many women from the locality to walk the path of progress capitalizing on their cultural engagements. They have travelled to international festivals showcasing their craft.



From weavers to entrepreneurs: The journey of transformation

Tapas Jana, Arun Khatua, Akhil Jana, Alok Jana, Ashok Jana and Ranjit Guchait, are excellent Madur weavers from Paschim and Purba Medinipur respectively, who are now successful entrepreneurs. They employ local artisans and run their entrepreneurial ventures focusing on both traditional and contemporary styles of production. While Tapas Jana, Alok Jana hand-weave traditional types of Madur, Arun Khatua, Ashok Jana, Akhil Jana and Ranjit Guchait are stalwarts in making a range of diversified items out of Madur. Being icons of success, these entrepreneurs have redefined the parameters of Madur weaving and given a source of employment for local weavers.





Exchange and Collaboration: Madur weavers transcending boundaries

Madur artists are collaborating with international institutions, design institutes and artists to bring innovation and creative imagination in their products. The artists have travelled to different countries like Lithuania, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Oman, China, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, United Kingdom to present their craft form.



Folk-Art Centre at Sabang

The West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board has developed a folk-art centre on Madur at Sarta, Sabang. For improving the quality of production and work environment, 8 production sheds have been developed at the units of leading entrepreneurs at Sabang and Pingla thus improving the order management process. This has also enhanced visit of tourists and customers to the location.

Artisans' Contacts

Paschim Medinipur

Alok Jana	9734845044
Tapas Jana	9434942166
Mithu Rani Jana	7585860943
Gouribala Das	9933517974
Gourirani Jana	9635178909
Nishikanta Das	9800314193
Ashok Jana	9733728742
Akhil Jana	9748137691
Arun Khatua	9775134162
Gurupada Mana	8972511596
Lakshmi Sahoo	8972187006
Kalyani Maity	9382960641
Netai Gayen	9735318301
Tapas Gayen	7076177878
Chandan Mula	9734736117
Madan Mohan Mana	8617884163
Srikanto Mondal	9733706946

Purba Medinipur

Sarajubala Giri	9547321445
Ranjit Guchait	9733486806
Biswajit Dutta	9733804115
Gopal Jana	6296195193
Swapan Giri	7586800532
Purna Chandra Giri	9732785430
Ashoke Pradhan	9564300817
Pabitra Samanta	9775257518
Sushanta Sashmal	6294409035
Ajay Giri	8768892531
Bijay Giri	9547376872
Anil Jana	9635777534
Kalachand Pradhan	8327049782





Products

Traditionally, the artists used to make a variety of *Masland* and *Mataranchi* mats. At present, apart from making a range of floor mats, artists are also producing a wide variety of innovative products having high market value, like table mats, bags, purses, boxes, folders, files, wall hangings, curtains, table runners, jackets, pen holders, etc.





Notebook



Bags



Accessories



Folders



Table runner & mats



Wall clock

Table runner & mats





 www.madurofbengal.com | www.rcchbengal.com | www.naturallybengal.com

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