

Design Resource

Banana Stem

The Art of Crafting Banana Plantation

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/banana-stem>

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Introduction

Kerala is a land filled with banana plantation. Banana fibre is expensive and rare as its production is low. Due to the lack of availability of banana fibre, Sisal fibre is commonly used. The various products have traditionally been hand-made and they are available in bright and attractive colour combinations. A range of products are made up of banana stem, sisal fibre and kora grass.

Banana Fibre:

Banana fibre is extracted from the banana stem and is soft. It possesses high strength, small elongation, good lustre, light weight, fast moisture absorption capability and easily degradable. The average fineness of a banana fibre is 2386Nm, and the average fibre length is 60mm. Longer the length of the fibre, better is the quality of the fibre. Although Banana trees are in plenty in Kerala, the banana fibre required for this craft is procured from Kanyakumari which is located in Tamil Nadu. This craft was originally practiced for domestic purposes by the people of Kerala. These crafts are conducted in a village named Muhamma, located in Cherthala Taluk, Alappuzha district, Kerala.

Sisal Fibre:

Sisal, scientifically called Agave Sisalana, contains a rosette of sword-shaped leaves. Its stalk measures about 1.5 to 2 meters tall, with golden brown fibre. The fibre is widely used in making ropes and twines, because of its strength, exceptional durability, ability to stretch, low maintenance requirement, affinity for certain dyestuffs, and resistance to deterioration in saltwater. It grows predominantly in the places with hot climate-

Kora Grass:

This is largely found in Orissa and is locally called as Kora Grass. This grass is also available in Tamil Nadu. Kora Grass is hard, rough and durable. It is used as a base material for cushions and baskets, due to its durability and robustness. They may be dyed as per requirement.

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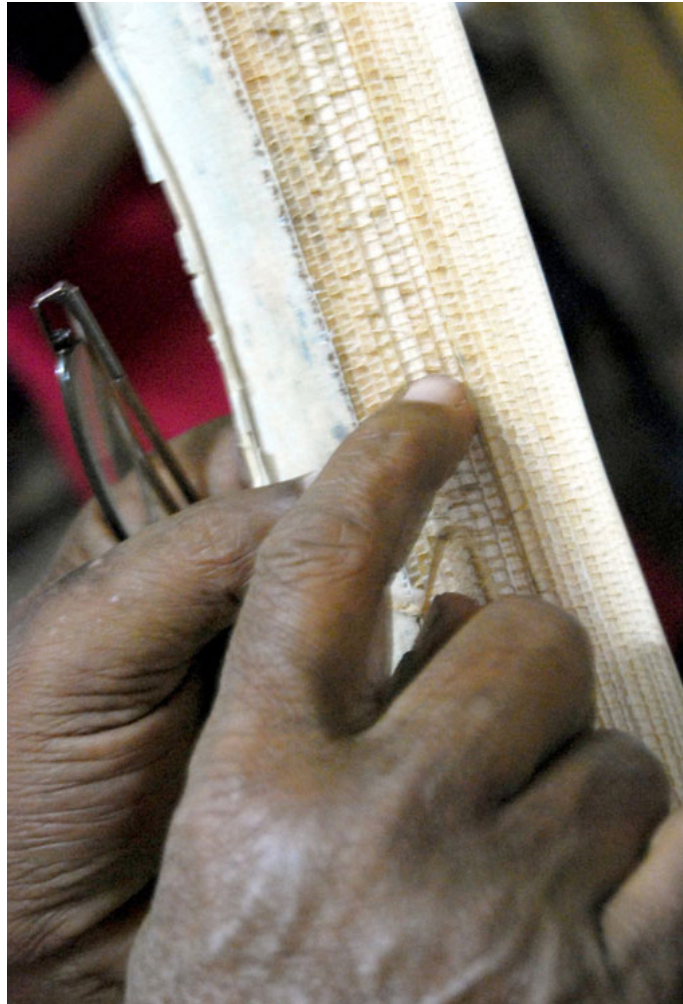
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Design Frames

Tools And Raw Materials:

Banana stem craft is easily produced as they are made using traditional and locally available resources, techniques, tools and instruments. The tools used for making products from banana stem are minimal. The frame is the base of a basket or cushion, which helps in tying the twines to the frame, made of mild steel. The frame is covered with a plastic sheet on the inside for support. Following are the tools and raw materials used for making products from Banana Stem:

- Kathri (Scissors)
- Sooji (Big Needles)
- Frame to make the baskets or cushions
- Different kinds of frames are used for making different kinds of products – Oval Frame, Cylindrical Frames, Square frames etc.
- Banana fibre – used for bags, lampshades etc
- Banana stem – used for cushions, dustbins, fruit baskets etc.
- Sisal fibre – used to make bags, pencil stands, baskets, table mats etc.
- Kora Grass – used for making twine

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Making Process

Process of making Banana craft:

The banana fibre is extracted from the banana stem. The products made from banana fibre and stem are smooth, delicate and has a good finish. The banana stem is cut, and the juice is extracted and flattened to make the stem flat for weaving. For flexibility, the banana stem is partially dried in sunlight for 2-3 days depending on the climatic conditions. The inside of the outer layer is used for weaving. It is dyed depending on the requirement.

Process of making Cushion:

The process of making bags and cushions are the same. For cushion making, only banana stem and Kora grass twines are used. However, for making bags fibres from sisal, banana and Kora grass of different colours are used to obtain various designs and patterns. These cushions are popular in Bangalore, Chennai and Delhi.

- The cylindrical frame made of mild steel is used to make a cushion.
- The cushion is made in two halves – upper case and lower case.
- The base of the cushion is made with one metal frame.
- The sides of the frame are covered with a plastic sheet for stiffness and support.
- To begin with the weaving process, a set of ten Kora grass twines is gathered and on banana stem is used to tie the ten Kora grass twines.
- The ends of the grass are knotted to the upper portion of the frame giving the base support.
- The weaving of the banana stem begins from the base of the cushion.
- The banana fibre is interwoven and simultaneously more grass twines are added to the frame to avoid gaps in the frame.
- The frame is removed by removing the knots.
- The case is stuffed with waste coir and banana stems.
- The knots are removed and the twine is used to join the upper and lower cases.
- The cushion is stitched by passing the needle back and forth, thus interlocking the two halves of the cushion.
- After the joining, the extra twines are cut.

Value addition to the final product happens through polishing, decorating the outer surface.

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Products

Banana Stem-Products:

Kerala produces various fibres which are available in abundance, except the banana stem and fibre. The fibres are used to make a variety of products which can be used for domestic purposes and as embellishments for the interiors and exteriors. These products are durable, eco-friendly and easily available. The process of making this craft is simple and easy for production. The products are designed and weaved using various patterns to enhance the product.

A list of banana fibre products are outlined below:

- Cushion
- Handbags
- Varieties of Baskets
- Lampshades
- Twines
- Pen stands
- Table mats

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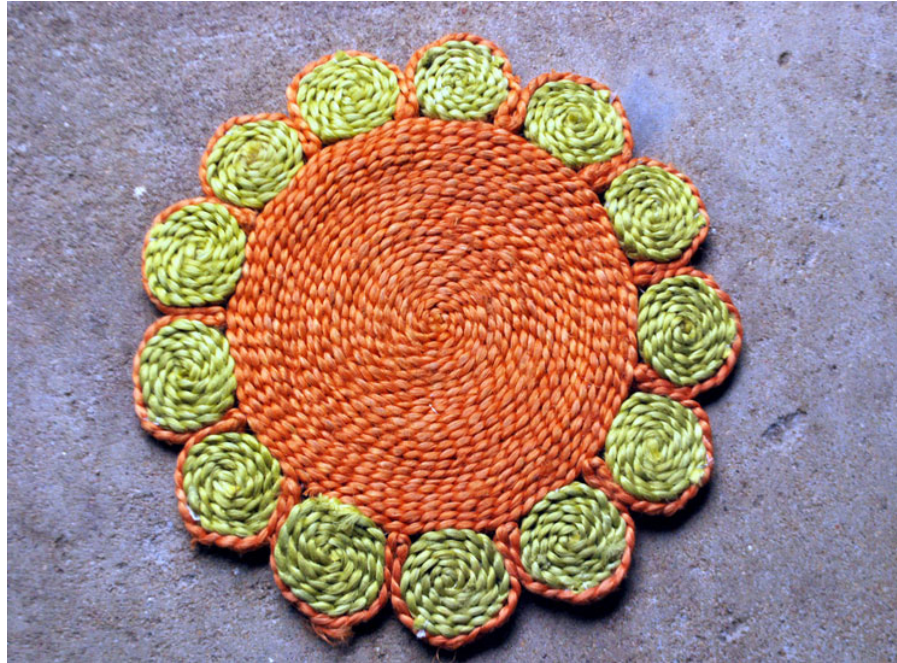
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Slide Show

Views of the Banana Stem:



A craft man displays the inner part of banana stem after peeling the outer skin which is used in making the craft.

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Raw sisal fibre and the twine made of it are displayed.



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The weaving of the banana stem begins from the base-frame.



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The banana fibre twine is used in the weaving process of the basket/cushion.



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The Kora grass is vertically tied to the frame to begin weaving the basket.



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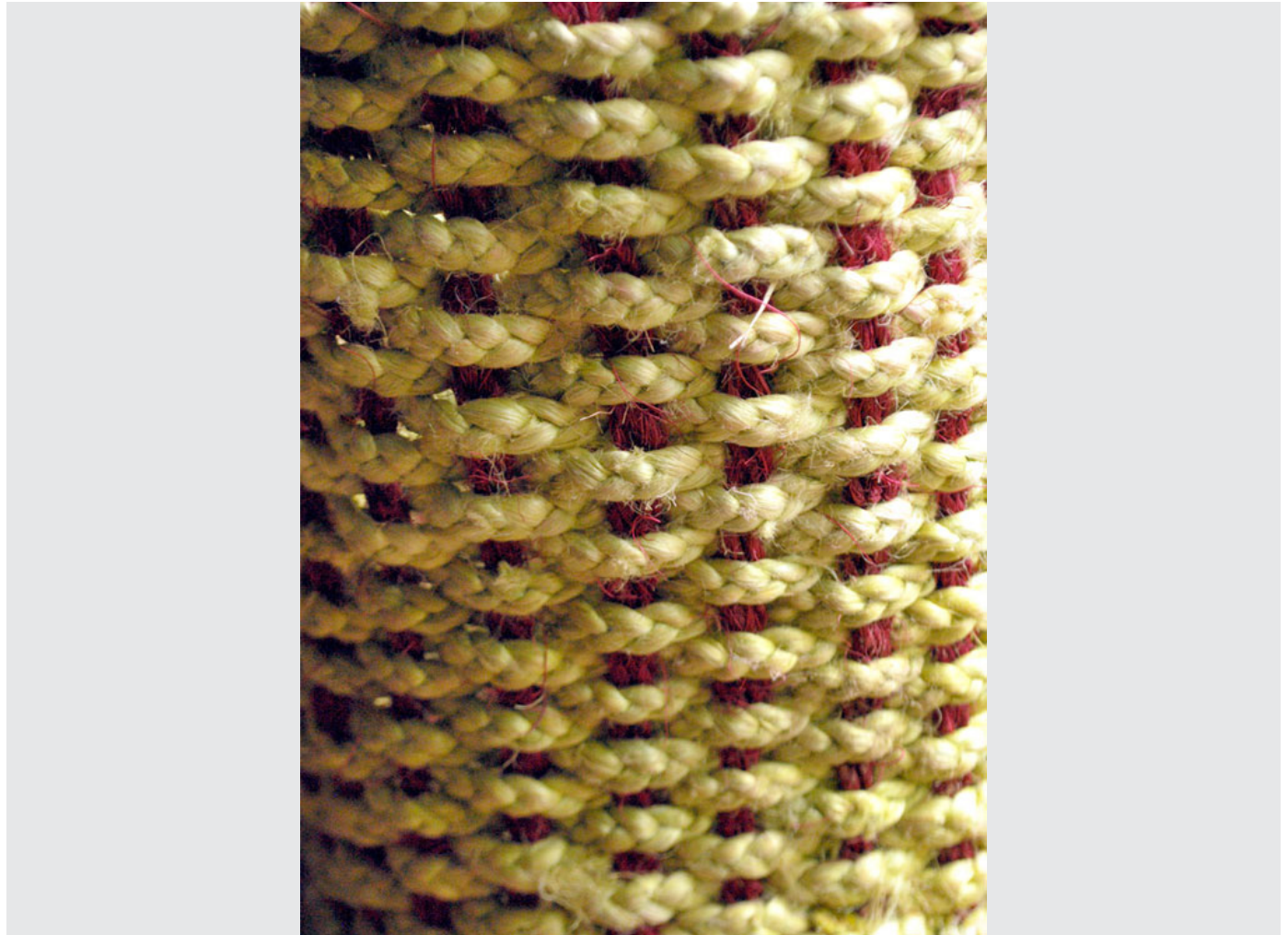
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The combination of dyed Kora grass twine and banana stem is used to obtain colourful patterns.



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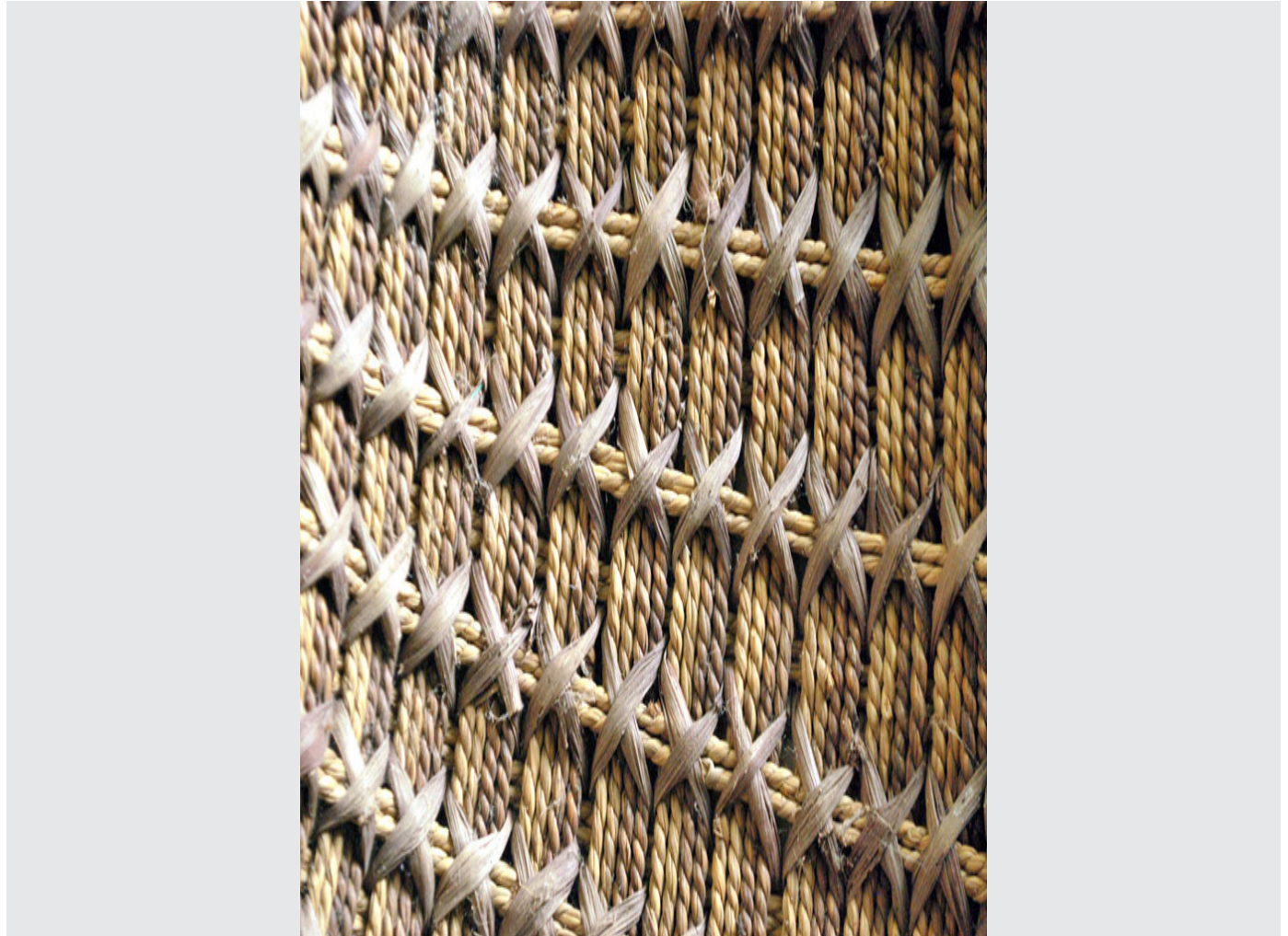
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The criss-cross pattern and the horizontal weave is elegantly designed to make the bag



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Twines of sisal fibre are stitched to make floor mats.



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Different colours of dyed thread and banana fibre are used to make different patterns in order to achieve better designs for house hold items.



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The tissue holder is aesthetically sewed and ornamented with zari work.



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A decorative artefact made out of banana fibre.



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Design Frames:



A long cylindrical metal frame made of mild steel.

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This circular frame is covered with a plastic sheet and it is used to make cushions.



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The oval shaped frame used for bag making.



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The plastic sheet is inserted inside the frame for support.



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The frame work begins by tying of the Kora grass.



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The fibre is tied to the rim of the basket and knotted at the opposite side.



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The combination of the natural fibre and dyed fibre are used to weave the product.



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The craft person is weaving the banana fibre across the body of the frame.



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The various types of metal frames used to create different products.



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Making Process:



The frame made of mild steel is used to start the weaving process.

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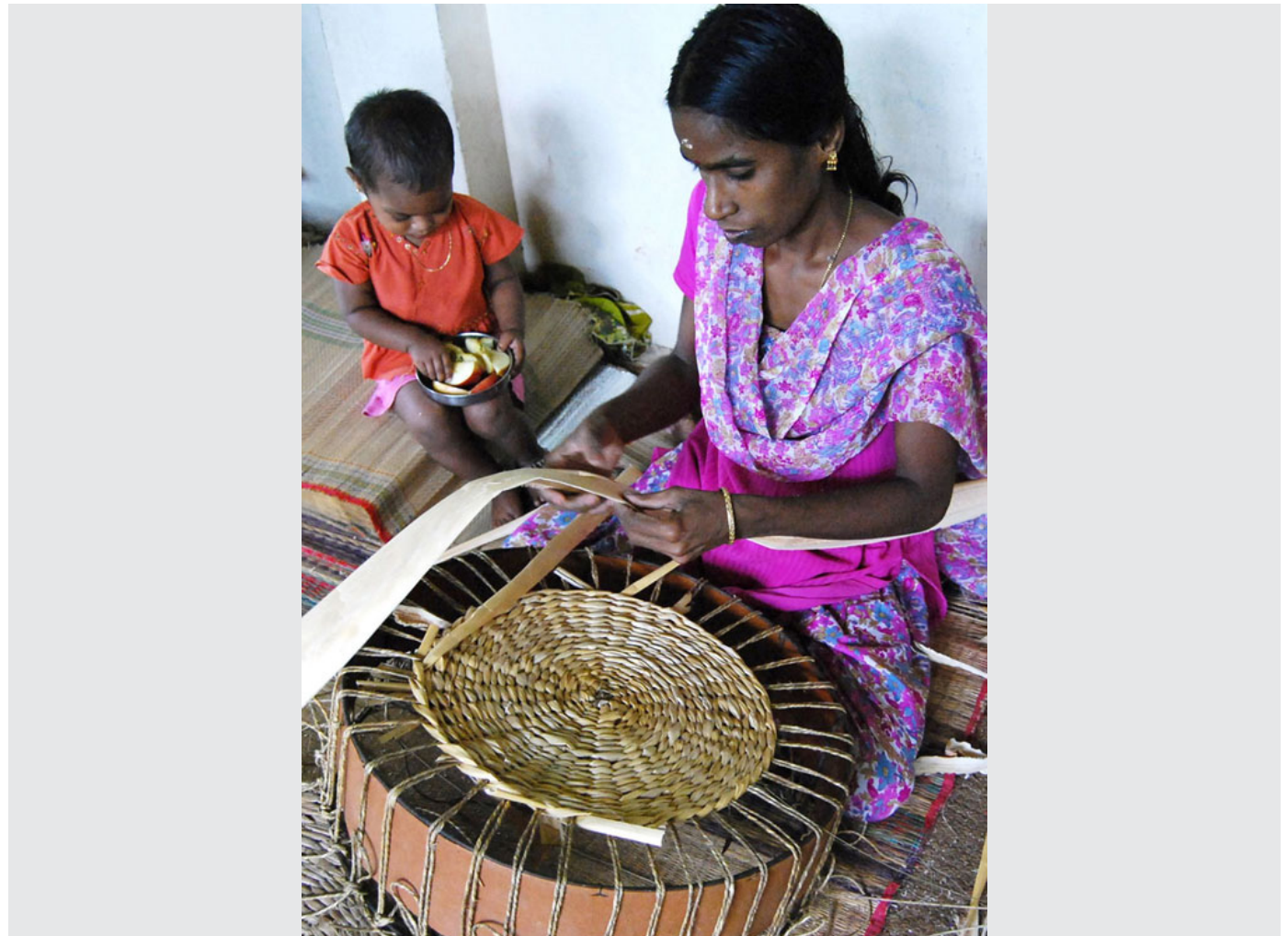
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The weaving process expands radially by continuous weaving starting from the center towards the border.



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A crafts woman busy in the weaving.



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Two halves of the cushion case are finished and kept for joining after filling the hollow portion with raw materials-banana fibre, Kora grass.



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The halves of the cushion are joined together by stitching at the joint spaces.



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The process of basket weaving begins by using Kora grass twines.



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A crafts woman busy in the weaving process.



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The plastic sheet is fixed around the frame and the artist is busy in the weaving process.



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In the weaving process the excess portion of the banana fibre are removed by cutting the fibre.



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A combination of dyed Kora grass and banana stem are used to make beautiful patterns.



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The stems are pulled inside by a needle and are knotted to complete the basket.



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The twines are further twisted to make the handles of the basket/bag.



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The basket is now ready.



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Products:



A fruit basket woven using the double twined pattern made of banana stem and bamboo.

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A table mat made of dyed Kora grass twine.



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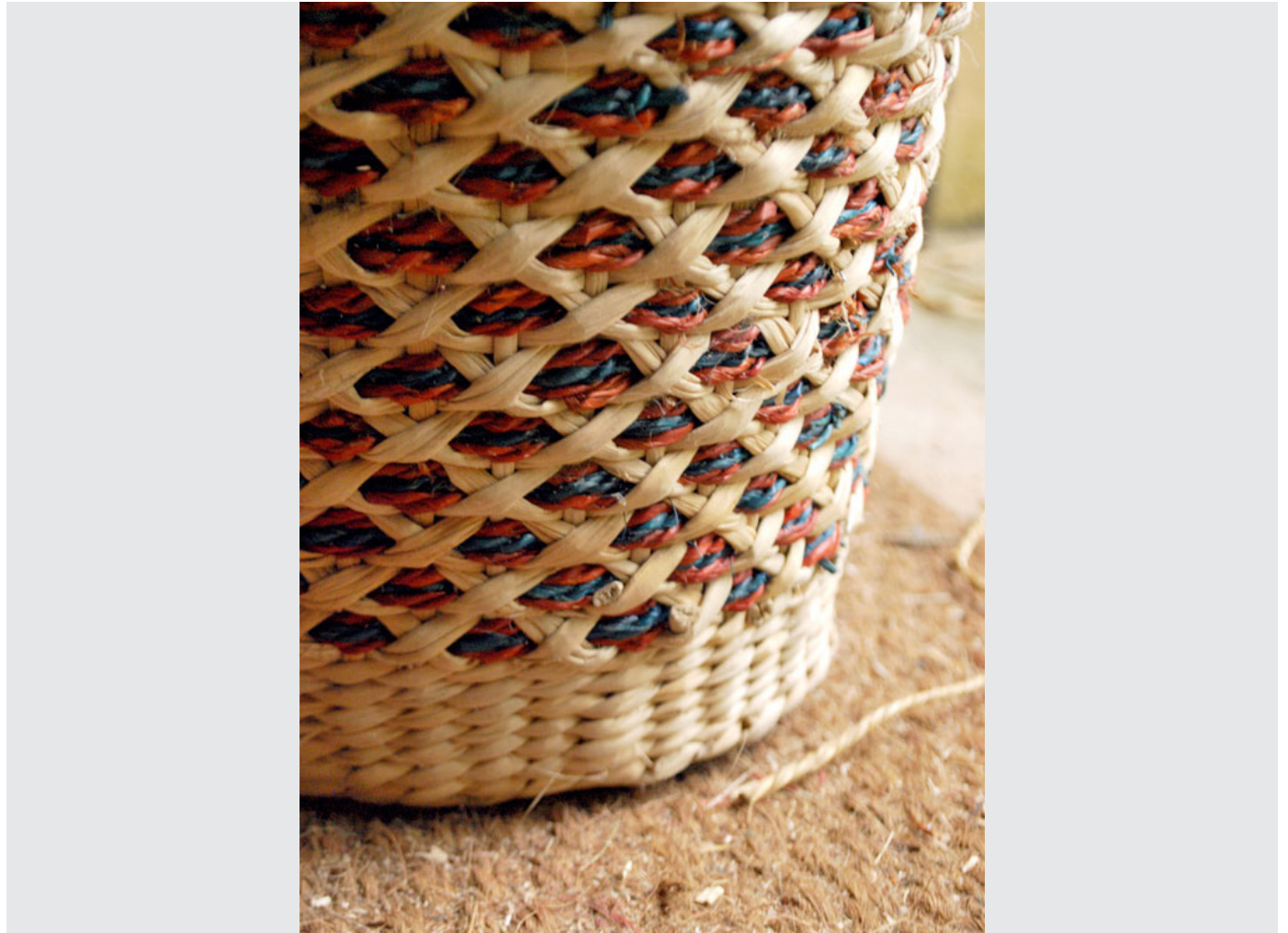
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/banana-stem/slide-show>

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The dyed grass, the patterns and the stem together enhances the surface of the basket.



Design Resource

Banana Stem

The Art of Crafting Banana Plantation

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William

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The artisan skilfully weaves the combination of different patterns and shades with great precision.



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The coir is woven in diagonal pattern in multiple shades to adorn the basket.



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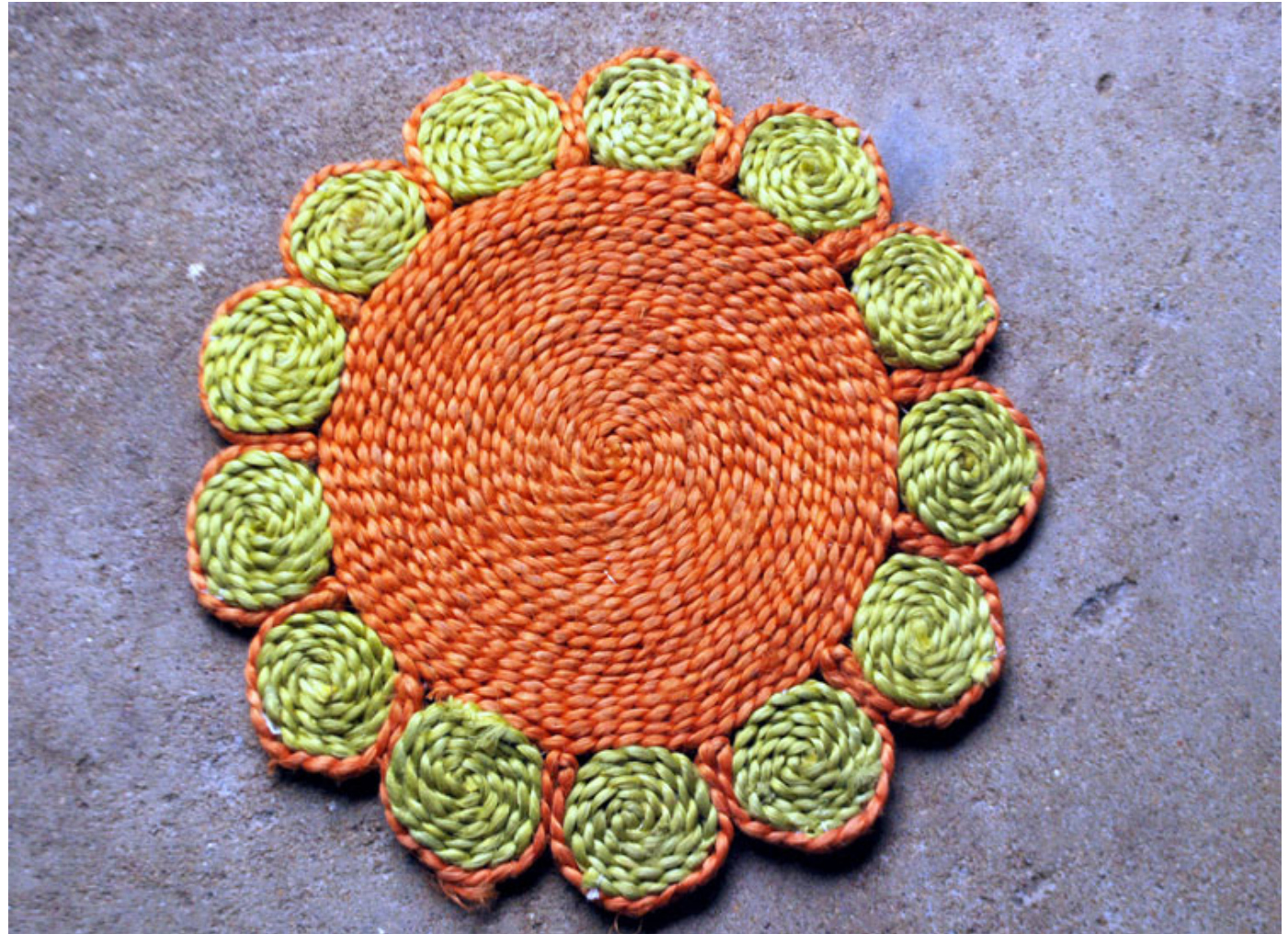
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A colourful centre table mat.



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The double twined pattern with dyes is used to make the waste basket.



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A basket with a lid made of banana stem.



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A bag made of dyed Sisal fibre and Kora grass twine.



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A bag made of all the three fibres – Kora, Sisal and Banana stem.



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Links

- [Craft Design in India](http://www.designinindia.net/everywhere/disciplines/craft-design/index.html)(<http://www.designinindia.net/everywhere/disciplines/craft-design/index.html>)
- [Online Infomation Centre for Crafts](http://www.india-crafts.com/)(<http://www.india-crafts.com/>)
- [Handmade in India](http://www.cohands.in/handmadepages/book0.asp)(<http://www.cohands.in/handmadepages/book0.asp>)
- [Crafts Council of India](http://www.craftscouncilofindia.org/)(<http://www.craftscouncilofindia.org/>)
- [Craft Mark](http://www.aiacaonline.org/)(<http://www.aiacaonline.org/>)
- [Arts and Crafts - Handicrafts and Handlooms](http://www.orissa-tourism.com/handi1.htm)(<http://www.orissa-tourism.com/handi1.htm>)

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by **Professor Bibhudutta Baral** and Mr. Antony William at **NID, Bengaluru**.

You can get in touch with Professor Bibhudutta Baral at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu).

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