

Design Resource

Handloom Kora Grass Mat - Vellore

Mat Weaving

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and
Lija M. G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/handloom-kora-grass-mat-vellore>



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Introduction

Kora grass mat weaving is generally found in southern India that mostly grows in the marshy areas. It is typically found in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala regions in India. These mats were found used for all the household activities of food serving, relaxing the body, as shelter to protect from sunlight, for Puja's/ Prayer mats etc. Kora grass is generally brought from Karur, Vellore, Madurai, Thanjavur, and Nagapattanam that is mostly grown near to the water places of the Tamil Nadu regions.

Kora grass are generally split very fine and woven with cotton warp on a ground loom. It is generally soaked in water before weaving, as it may break on rigid uses. The Kora grass mat weaving is done on the traditional ground loom at Vaniyambadi of Tamil Nadu. The craftsmen mentions he learnt it from his father who had taught him and his brothers when they were residing at Pattamadai (Pattapathei told by the craftsmen) that is few kilometers away from Vaniyambadi.

The Kora grass mat weaving is done by the Gounder family, the craftsmen weaves on the ground that is set on the little place that is near to the craftsmen's house. The roofing of the work place is done with sticks placed vertical to the ground and coconut leaves tied tightly to each other such that there is no space for the rain water to pour into the place during the rainy seasons. This shelter is good and changed only once in either two or three years as said by the craftsmen. As kora grass is woven on the ground loom, the ground is spread with the cow dung paste as it is one of the tradition followed at the Tamil Nadu regions. This is done once in a week minimum for the better weaving of the kora grass on the ground loom. It is also said this coating is given on the ground to repel insects, thereby the person working on this loom and the loom materials are safe.

Though it is better to weave the Kora grass mat on the ground loom with the mentioned conditions, people have shifted to weaving on the power loom as they were unable to set and weave on the ground loom. There is about three power looms in working condition in Agaramcheri that is few kilometers away from Vaniyambadi that weaves the plain and the coloured pattern designs.

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Placing a Kora grass into the hole in the shuttle.

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The cotton threads segregated to start the weaving.



The Kora grass mat getting weaved.



Artisan weaving the Kora grass mat.

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Each yarn passed through reeds.

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Sisal fibre extracted from Agave Sisalana.



The mat's edges are tied to give a finished look.



The Kora Grass mat weaving is completed.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Ground (Hand) loom tools and raw materials at Vaniyambadi:

- **Cotton Thread:** It is generally used to weave the kora grass.
- **Kora Grass:** It is collected from the water areas nearby, wherever it is commonly grown.
- **Knife:** It is used to cut the extra threads, kora grasses.
- **Coconut Leaf Shelter:** It is changed once in every two- three years to provide a better shelter for the ground loom.
- **Katalae Nool Kadhira:** It is a tool used to twist the sisal fiber to the thread form.
- **Maezuthatae:** Bamboo piece is used to support the foot while weaving.
- **Pallani Manae:** Wooden piece placed under the woven mat for the sitting support during weaving.
- **Bricks:** These are placed below the woven mat for the sitting support during weaving.
- **Mukoonam Kol:** Three sticks placed in triangle shape to rise the warp threads for continuous weaving.
- **Vaalae:** Bamboo stick is placed in between the cotton threads to separate the two threads.
- **Pithaalae:** Slender wood piece used to insert the kora grass in-between the cotton threads.
- **Sisal Fiber:** It is used to stitch the edges of the woven kora grass mat.
- **Thin Coir Ropes:** It is placed along with the kora grass at the edges to provide stiffness.
- **Water:** Kora grass, sisal fibers are immersed in little water before the process to avoid breakages.
- **Thick Coir Ropes:** It is used to tie the Mukoonam kol (three sticks) firmly to each other.
- **Gunny Bags and Cloth:** It is used as a cushion for the weaver during weaving.

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Color mixed with water to dye the Kora Grass.



The dye in powder form before mixing it with water.



The green dye in powder form.



A roll of cotton thread used in weaving.

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Custom made knife used to cut threads.



Wooden shuttle with holes to pull the Kora grass.

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Plain and dyed Kora Grass in pink and green colors.



A ball of sisal fiber thread.



Kora grass and Sisal fiber put together to stitch along the edges.

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Knife used to cut sisal fiber.



Spindle used in rolling sisal fiber.



Extracted sisal fiber, rolled to threads and stitched at the edges of the mat.

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Making Process

The cotton thread is tied to one end of the Pallani (locally called for reed), the broken threads are knotted to each other firmly by the weavers knot. The threads are lengthened by the clockwise and anticlockwise movements of the hand of the craftsmen to the required length, keeping the threads in the hands of the craftsmen only. Each loop is then tied to the pole with the rope tightly, the reed is brought forward with the stick that behaves like the heddle.

The Mukoonam kol with the foot support (i.e. the three sticks in the triangle shape) is placed firmly and the stick behaving like the heddle is tied and raised up to the required height. Then the Vaalae is placed in between the threads for spacing and the Maezuthatae on the threads for supporting the foot movement while weaving. After placing the Pallani manae the threads are adjusted in all sides and tightened. The thin wooden piece Pithaalae is passed in between the gaps of the two threads for placing the kora grass either plain or coloured as per the pattern to be woven.

As per the craftsmen, it requires three hours in setting and weaving of one paaya (i.e. mat) whereas for his wife about five hours. The loom is always set by himself and his wife extends her hand in weaving after completing the household work. The kora grass are placed in little water and then woven to avoid the breakages. After the required length of mat is woven, the threads are cut with knife and knotted.

On the other hand the craftswomen twists the separated sisal fiber to a thread form with the Katalae Nool Kadhira, that is used as thread to sew the edges along with two kora grass and thin coir rope for stiffness at the edges. After the edges are stitched with the sisal fibers, it is then cut with the knife to obtain a smooth finish.

These are the only craftsmen left in Vaniyambadi who till today follow the making of the mat on the traditional ground loom, whereas others have shifted to making on the power looms. As there are some of the power looms in the nearby locations who weave the mats, the coloured kora grass are generally brought from them and woven as per the craftswomen.

As the sons of the craftsmen had expired due to ill health few years ago, this method of weaving is only known to him and his wife. This is the only craftsmen at Vaniyambadi who is keenly insisting on following this tradition as it was handed down to him by his father. Though there are lot of difficulties the craftsmen is facing in Vaniyambadi they are trying their best to keep this craft alive till their death.

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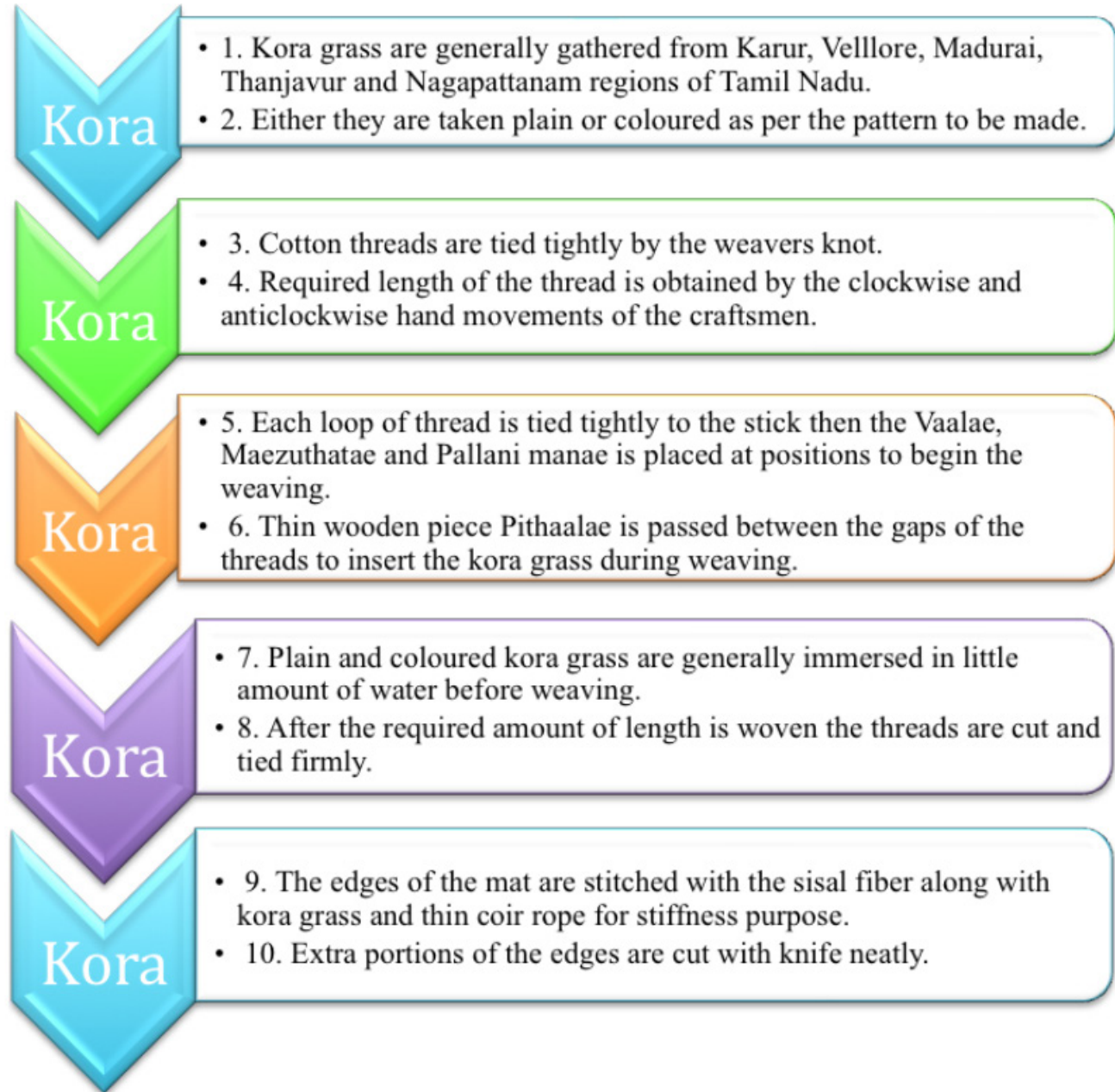
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Flow chart:



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Tying new thread to the previous thread attached to the loom.

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Artisan pulls the threads to exceed its length.



Artisan tightening the pull of threads.



Wooden shuttle is passed across the threads.

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Artisan picking up a Kora Grass to begin the weaving.



Inserting the Kora Grass to the hole in the shuttle.



The holes in the wooden shuttle where the Kora Grass is passed.



The Kora Grass is passed across the threads.

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The reed is pulled to tighten the Kora Grass mat.



Artisan putting a Kora Grass into the hole in the shuttle.



Knotting the threads at the end of the mat.



Artisan cutting the threads after knotting.

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The sides' Kora Grass is ripped with the help of knife.



Kora Grass and sisal fiber are placed at the sides of the mat, the Kora Grass are folded and stitched with sisal fiber.



The folding of Kora Grass at the sides and stitching with sisal fiber to give a finished look.

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Products

Kora grass mats were previously made on the handlooms, nowadays only one craftsman along with his family is still continuing in Vaniyambadi. Remaining people are either stopped or shifted to making of the Kora grass mat on the Power loom.

The variety of products along with their sizes made by the craftsmen on the ground loom is as given below. They are mostly sold in pairs by the craftsmen of Vaniyambadi.

1. Big mat with 48" of six feet with about two pairs costing about Rs. 600.
2. Medium size mat with 42" of six feet with two pairs costing about Rs. 450.
3. Small size mat with 36" of six feet with two pairs costing about Rs. 200.



The finished Kora Grass mat with its sides yet to be cut.

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The finished Kora Grass mat.



The Kora Grass mat held to display the complete mat.

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Video



Kora Grass Mat Weaving - Hand Loom

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Contact Details

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