

Design Resource

Reed Mat Weaving (Madur) - Medinipur, Kolkata

Handmade Mat

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth B.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/reed-mat-weaving-madur-medinipur-kolkata>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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Introduction

Mats has a long history dating back to the early stages of the Indus Valley Civilization. Hence this category of products enjoys a socio-cultural relevance in the Indian land while also having mentioned in ancient scriptures. According to testimonies from the medieval period, the present-day mats were originated in Bengal and slowly spread to other parts of the country. Legends go like, previously when the walls and floors of village houses were made of clay and polished with cow dung and fay, the people had only floors for their sleeping and sitting purpose due to the absence of furniture. As these floors were often cool, it was quite uncomfortable, especially during winters. Thus the mats were introduced, which were made of straws, grass, leaf, reeds, etc., helping the person keep cold afar. The item was equally preferred during summers, too, due to its property of sweat absorption.

Madur is one of the most famous and prominent mats among the varieties of mats manufactured in West Bengal. In Bengal, the word Madur is generic for floor mats. It is an ancient cottage industry from the place of Medinipur. The artisans working from the area are well trained in gathering labor-intensive raw materials and tools required for the craft. They weave these mats on a bamboo frame, using reed stalks and jute yarns. Today, the craft is practiced in workshops usually set inside households and run by family members. The craft, which is a means of living for thousands from the rural areas, is highly regarded for its durability and range of varieties. Mr. Hari Mandal, a senior artisan from the Maya village of Medinipur, is one among the few who practices the traditional form of reed mat weaving, which is in great demand in the Bengal market. He and his family are actively involved in both the farming of madur grass as well as madur weaving, an activity that is taken up for an additional source of income. Madur crafts produce products like table runners, mats, curtains, hats, purses, sun-guards, etc.

Medinipur is a place in Kolkata, situated on the banks of the river Kangsabati. The place with rich historic importance holds a number of archaeological sites perpetuating Jainism and Buddhism, namely, Tamralipta, Mahamaya temple, etc., built in the 10th century by the Soma Vamsi Dynasty of Odisha.

1. Introduction

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3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

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Craftsman's house at Maya village of Medinipur.



Artisan and his family working on reed mat weaving from three generations.



Women artisans involved in the mat making.

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4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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Artisan dedicated to the work.



Artisans involved in the traditional reed mat weaving.



Semi-finished reed mat.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for Reed Mat Weaving are as follows:

- **Reed Stalks:** It is the primary raw material for making the mat.
- **Jute Yarn:** It is used in the weaving process.
- **Wooden Mallet:** It is used to knock the bamboo sticks so that they are rightly fixed to the frame that holds the handloom.
- **Wooden Comb:** It helps in aligning the yarn in the frame and push the reed stalks to stay intact.
- **Hand Loom:** It is made of jute yarn and bamboo poles, which is made for weaving.



Fine quality reed stalks wrapped and ready for weaving.

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3. Making Process
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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

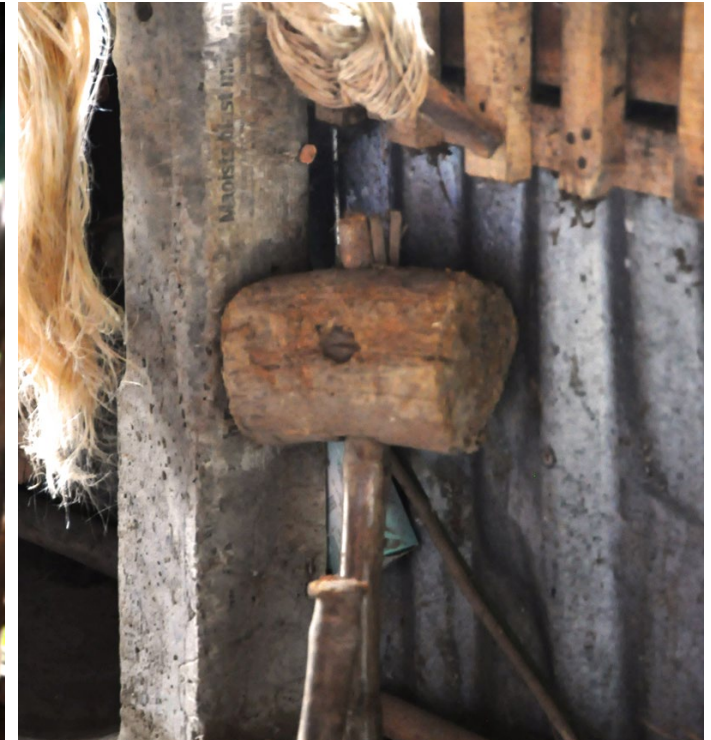
4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Jute yarn is used in the weaving process.



A wooden mallet helps to knock the bamboo sticks to the ground.



A wooden comb is used to align the yarn and push reed stalks together.



Reed stalks are tied tightly for strong support.

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Making Process

Weaving mat is a method where organic fibers turned into strips are plaited to form a structure. It is similar to any other weaving process but executed without the use of any high-end machines. Here firstly, the artisan keeps locally grown reed stalks ready. Then using a wooden mallet, bamboo sticks are knocked to the ground and fit the handloom to it. Later, by arranging the jute yarn strings with a wooden comb's help, the handloom frame is prepared. When the frame is ready, the artisan starts weaving the reed stalk one at a time, going through alternative strings. This is repeated multiple times until the intended length for the mat is achieved. Here the strips are woven in accordance with a predetermined pattern. Now with the help of a wooden comb, the reed stalks are pushed together and knotted at both ends. And as the last step, the extra reeds hanging from both sides are cut to give the mat a finishing touch.

Flow Chart:

[1. Introduction](#)[2. Tools and Raw Materials](#)[3. Making Process](#)[4. Products](#)[5. Video](#)[6. Contact Details](#)

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Thick bamboo stalks being tied for strong support.



Artisan weaving a reed stalk.



The reed stalks are woven by going through alternative strings.



Artisans carrying out the activity with full commitment.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



With the help of wooden combs, the reed stalks are pushed together to make them stay intact.



Artisan tying knots at the ends of stalks.



Stalks being set together.



A glimpse of a fully completed traditional reed mat.

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Products

The reed mats made by Mr. Hari Mandal and his family members are sold at a cost starting from INR 200 to INR 600, which defers according to the product size. Here the minimum size is 2x2 ft. while the maximum goes up to 6x5 ft.



A hand woven reed mat ready for commercial sale.

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Video



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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth B. at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

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

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details