

Design Resource

## Golden Grass Craft - Puri, Orissa

Golden Grass Craft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

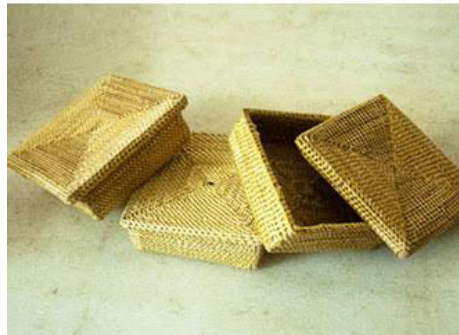
Aakash Sharma

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/golden-grass-craft-puri-orissa>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
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## Introduction

Weaving of baskets in India is an art as old as pottery making. In early times, travelling food gatherers used to weave reeds composed to prepare baskets. Later, changed materials and cultures developed a diversity of basketry for domestic as well as for ritual purposes. In India, people make baskets out of twigs, bamboo, cane and different types of wild grass. Punjab is famous for its sturdy spirally built baskets in which, a wild grass is used for the basic form which is stitched together with the help of various other grass. The paddle baskets of Gop are known for its Intricate designs. Orissa has a tradition of making baskets out of monsoon grass called Moonj and the village is famous for this type of craft.

In this region, tribal community of Gop carries on a tradition of basket making which is quite distinct from sikki baskets. Tharus baskets have a bolder form and are decorated with human and animal figures on it. Kulas are the winnowing baskets of Bengal painted with auspicious symbols. Similarly in south, Mysore is famous for its Cane basketry. Tamil Nadu is famous for the Chettinad baskets. They make intricate patterns with the help of date -palm leaves. These patterns are as fine as embroidery and are the specialty of the Chatti community of the area. The North-Eastern region of India has the finest examples of cane and bamboo basketry work. In fact one could say that their lives depend on this material. One can very easily see it everywhere in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa and Tripura.

Golden grass craft has finally come of age, and finds a place in the market across the globe.

Golden grass is also known as 'wild grass' which is found in many parts of the district and other areas of the state. It grows to a height of about 5-6 feet and the inflorescent stick, which appears after the monsoon, is used for weaving. In the recent past, Golden grass is discovered by the dwellers and weavers as it's attractive to look. Golden grass product as the products are eco-friendly, biodegradable and reduce the use of plastic.

Over 200 women's of village Gop have been working out their livelihoods by making golden grass crafts. A new concept of grass jewelry has come from here, where artisans make attractive and designer jewelry along with other accessory items like bags, key chains and other items from the golden grass. The colored golden grass with uniquely -painted petals and bright golden grass hats, flower-pots and other items speak of fine craftsmanship. Today the demand for golden grass crafts has increased and this testifies to their beauty, utility and lasting quality. Beautiful collectibles in golden-grass craft that have been used for house-hold purpose for years by the people of Gop and its nearby areas.

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Currently golden craft items are redesigned for the international buyers according to their taste and preference, but not detaching it from the ethnicity. The origin of this craft as it is in the case of other art and crafts, is centuries old. Since generations golden grass items like bowls, fans, mats etc. have been used as utility items in many parts of the state. Women during their leisure time prepare these high quality craft items at a common place. This traditional craft has transcended down from generation to generations. There is a huge demands for golden grass crafts, the lively colonies of golden craft-persons of many villages today reflect their economy growth. Even the lanes and by lanes of the areas reflect the change that has come about.

The artisan community work unsociable hours and in extreme conditions to support their families with their amazing craft skills, transforming raw materials that nature provides into stunning eco-friendly usable products. The artisans are in full control of their products, they decide on their prices according to the time involved in production. Senior artisans have been teaching the crafts knowledge as well as the ancestral songs and poems to the new generation, telling them the history and different methods, teaching them lovely songs that are sang during harvest and crafting preparation. These artisans believe that they can make a difference in people's lives by spreading their work and showcasing their skills to the rest of the world.



The view of Gop, a village in Puri district of Orissa.

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Artisan finished the golden grass product with the help of a sharp iron tool.



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Variety of boxes made out of golden grass.



Hand fan made out of golden grass.



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Artisans who work for golden grass craft.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Sikki grass is grown in the wet and marshy area around the rivers and pounds in Gop. The sikki is characterized by its wonderful beautiful golden color, so it is also called Golden Grass. It is grown in the area of heavy rainfall. This golden grass is usually collected in the rainy season. The dry grass is sold at the local market by the foot. Munj (another grass) and khar are other important raw materials for the making of golden grass products. Munj is much cheaper and more abundant and so, it's used to give basic shape and strength in golden grass products. Other raw materials are the colors and are easily available in the local market. The last and most valuable raw material is water, which is used to soak the golden grass and make it more pliable as it is coiled around the munj.

Following are the tools and raw materials used for the process of golden grass craft:

- **Sikki (Golden) Grass:** It's grown in wet and marshy area around the rivers & pounds.
- **Munj:** Its another type of grass that's used to develop a shape.
- **Khar:** Other important raw materials for the making of golden grass products.
- **Chemical Colors:** Its used for dyeing of golden grass. (It is also colored into different shades of colors like red, yellow, green, deep blue, purple, and pink, etc.)
- **Water:** which is used to soak the golden grass.
- **Needle:** A 5-6 inches long needle-shaped iron object with a rounded head for grip.
- **Knife:** Its used for slitting the grass to extract excess amount of pieces.
- **Scissors:** Its used for cutting the golden grass.
- **Twine:** Its used to pierce the needle for stitching the craft.
- **Takua:** It is used carefully to cut the golden grass.
- **Blade:** Its used to slice off the grass.

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The stock of processed grass.



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Big size needle.



Blade is used for cutting grass.



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A set of enchorial color.



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## Making Process

Discover the maintainable gold that is taking the world by a storm. Golden grass, the long gilded golden stem which is mostly found in the wet land of Gop village in Puri district. Its main distinguishing is its natural brightness and golden color, hence its common name “sikki”. It can only be harvested in few months of the year. At harvest, the flower bud is removed and scattered in the wet grassland where they are harvested. This provisions the sustainability of handicraft work and funds to those who producing it. The art of working with golden grass was beforehand taught to local women by homegrown people throughout the region around, probably from the antique ethnic group, by using backbones like needles to weave and sew the grass. This method is very popular even today and has been passing on from group to generation. Products are sourced unswervingly from artisans' communities and producer-owned connotations that come from remote regions. These communities have found a very commanding way to support their families by making desirable eco-friendly jewelry and home tickertapes which they would then sell to local people and travelers visiting the region.

To make the sikki (Golden Grass) grass usable, it is first cut from its base and then dried for some days. The blossom part, the stem of golden grass is not used for crafts making, it is thrown away and the remaining portion of the golden grass is sliced and shaved with the help of a knife or by teeth. The golden grass is considered by its wonderful beautiful golden color, so it is also called Golden Grass. It is also colored into dissimilar shades of colors like red, yellow, green, deep blue, purple, and pink, etc. with the natural golden color to make the final product more attractive. Golden grass is soaked in water to make it more flexible as it is coiled everywhere the munj. The coloring is achieved by boiling golden grass in different colors. Now the main form is shaped with munj or khar (other type of grass) to deliver the basic shape and additional asset to the sikki product. Due to its abundance, usually munj is used for coiling purpose in Gop. Then the munj is totally coiled over and covered with golden grass so that it is not noticeable through the encasing. Then the main tool, takua is used prudently because it can also cut golden grass if the artisan doesn't use it carefully. The product being made is held firmly with the left hand while the right hand is totally free to wield the takua. These artisan make different designs and patterns with golden grass, they also syndicate dyed golden grass with natural color to give it more artistic and gorgeous look. It requires not only skill but lots of creativity, attentiveness and patience.

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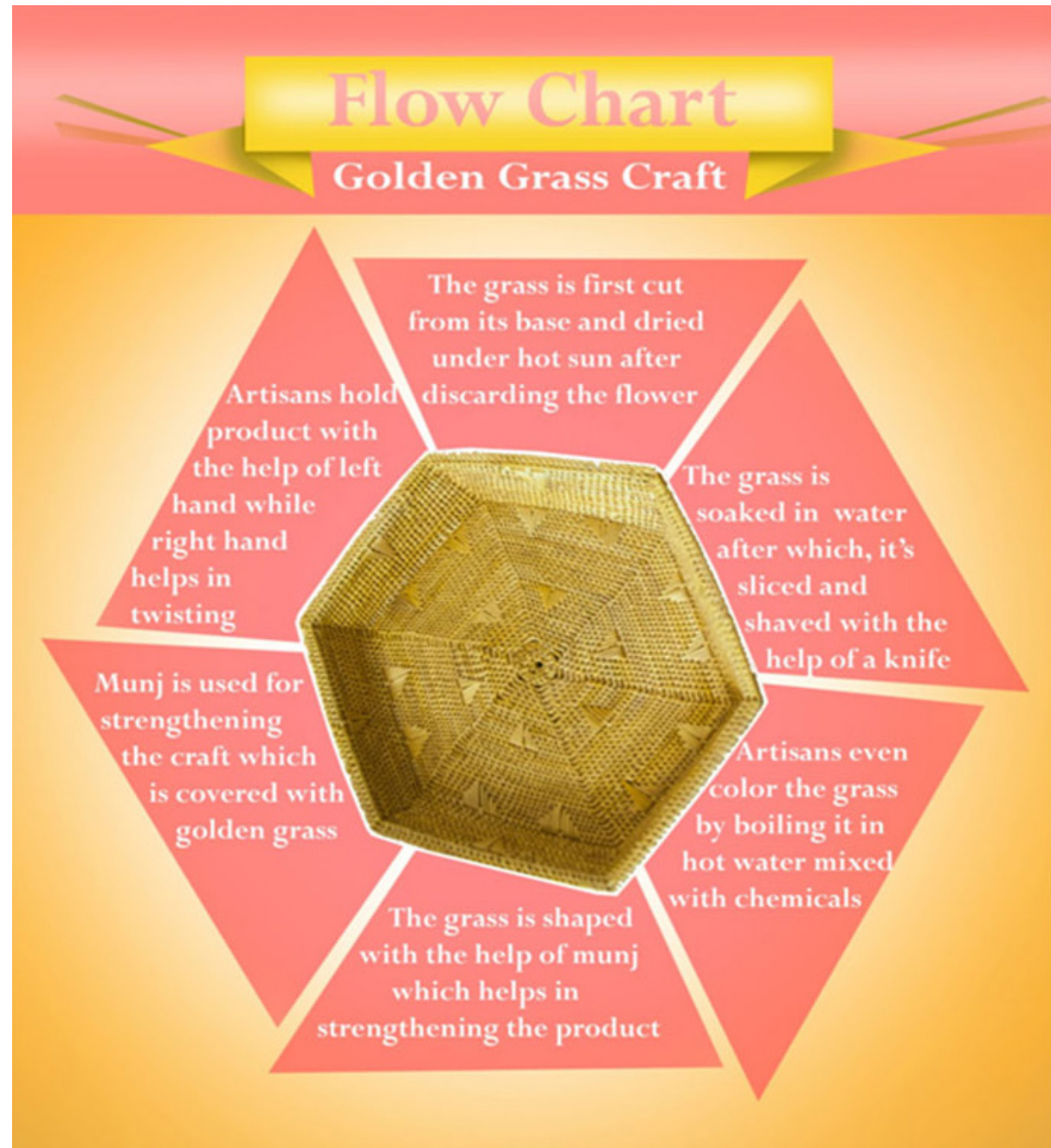
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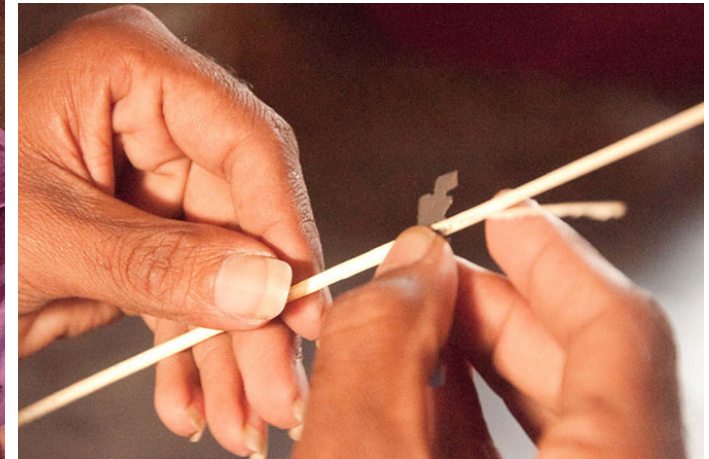
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The color solution is made and the grass is soaked in it for 5 to 10 min.



Artisan begins to winding the grass.



The outer area is being removed using blade.

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Grass stretched tightly to make base strong.



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Sharp iron tool is used for creating gap in the coil.



Thickness of the product depends on number of grass taken while winding.



Final product made by artisan.

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## Products

Earlier, women of Gop used to make utility products (baskets and containers), 2D-3D figures of Gods, Goddesses (for religious purpose) Birds and Animals. But now they are making dissimilar variety of serviceable as well as ornamental products according to the demand of the present market. Utilitarian products they make different types of traditional containers and boxes for their household purpose like, big containers with a cap to store food grains, trays for fresh fruits, and beautiful small boxes with caps to keep jewelry, Dry fruits, etc. Various other products like Mobile cases, Masks, Mirror frames, Table mats, Pencil boxes, Hand-held fans, Colorful bowls, Jewelry Boxes, Bangles, Toys, Pen stands, Paper Weights and 3-D figures that containers of all types and sizes.

These artisans make beautiful utility products from centuries, now they are aware of the choice of the customers and are trying to make different products according to demand of the market with respect to design and shapes. Golden grass craft has a variable price range from INR.15 to INR.500 depending on the intricacy and the size of the product. If they participate in any craft fair or exhibition, they get a fair amount of orders for the products they are making. So, many women in Gop started golden grass craft making it a full-time occupation. This craft is a source of livelihood for them. Technological changes since the artisan use only 1-2 simple tools for their work, they do not need any change in technology or process.

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Artistic files are made out of golden grass.



Dinning table mat made by golden grass.



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A square box made of golden grass to store various things.



Pen stand made out of golden grass.

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The gift box is weaved beautifully.



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## Video



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