

# Empowered Women, Better World: The Story of Women From the Tharu Tribe of Uttarakhand

## Originilism and Tharu Tribe

The moonj grass basketery is a perfect exmaple of originalism being practised by the **Tharu tribe**, a community nestled in the Terai and Bhabar region of Kumaun division in Uttarakhand, administratively it is known as the **Udham Singh Nagar District**.



The Tharu people consider themselves as the ‘people of the forests’ since they are mainly involved in agricultural work. Tharu women take a lot of pride in their artistic skills of creating beautifully handcrafted products using the local grass i.e Moonj, available in their area. These women are extremely proficient weavers who are able to use their traditional skills to develop baskets with intricate designs, vibrant colours and patterns. As a cultural practice, the highly decorated baskets are given as gifts to daughters in marriages. Moonj baskets with original narratives and intended use have been crafted since decades.

**Moonj** is a wild grass that grows along the seasonal ponds or larger water sources that is harvested by hand usually during the monsoons. The women travel long distances from their villages to harvest this grass, a time consuming task, as only the central stem of the grass needs to be gathered rather than the whole grass itself. After a few days of sun drying the grass is lighter in colour and then the actual process begins. Moonj is cut, shaved and dyed in different colours and left out to dry again. Only after this initial preparation which spans over a few days and involves a lot of hardwork, is the grass ready to be woven into gorgeous and stunning pieces of baskets and many other extremely efficient and handy products.



# Contemporary Designs with effort to maintain Originilism

**Mon Ami Foundation**, an independent not for profit trust, registered in 2015, works with a focus on social responsibility. It works closely with corporates, domain experts, service providers and recipient communities to support projects related to skills, livelihood ehancement and sustainability. **Mon Ami Foundation** along with **USN District, Uttarakhand** and **JBGVS** have lent their support in terms of design and market linkages, to sustain this craft and make it more adaptable for the urban/ international set-up. The effort involved working closely with the women from Tharu tribe to introduce modern designs and forms. The painstaking slow process involved multiple rounds of product development. Know more about our work on [www.monamifoundation.com](http://www.monamifoundation.com).

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