

- Promoting Fair Trade and eco-friendly products
- Crafts from traditional workshops around the world
- Crafts from local artisans here in the Westcountry

## Fair Trade Hand Made Brushes from

# The village of the brushes

### The storey of the brushes

Just over two hours from the teeming slums of central Calcutta lies a special village — The Village of Brushes.

Approaching it, the road becomes narrower and narrower, turns into a track and finally a footpath through what could be a jungle from Kipling's time. In a clearing, huts cluster round a lake shaded by tall trees of every variety and it is here that a whole community is involved in the manufacture of bristle brushes of every description.

First the brushes are sorted into different colours; this work is done by small groups of women. Off cuts of wood from the carefully managed forestry are then hand carved into charming animal shapes; this work is done by men working individually so each piece is special. Holes are then drilled into the other side of the brushes to receive the bristles.

Until recently this process was done entirely using a hand drill, but with the help of funds from an IFAT organization, two punching machines have been purchased. These are hand operated. The bristles are then glued into place by groups of women and finally the brushes are hand polished and packed up ready for dispatch.

This cottage industry, supported by IFAT, in a rural community provides important income generation for otherwise marginalized people.

Children are able to attend the government school and, most importantly, are not forced to seek employment on the streets of Calcutta.



Villagers making the brushes by hand

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