

FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Sasibai Kimis advocates fair trade principles in the fashion industry

“I am inspired by the everyday woman who tirelessly works to feed and care for her family, and the women who fight for the needs of the voiceless,” says Sasibai Kimis, the founder of Earth Heir. Her company aims to help craftspeople achieve sustainable livelihoods by selling handmade accessories produced by them to the public, ensuring that they earn a fair income and have good living conditions. This is one of the many issues that Sasibai is challenged to tackle head on. She also aims to establish initiatives to improve the living standards of craftspeople and their surroundings. Besides helping craftspeople, she plans to work towards supporting non-profit organisations for exploited and trafficked persons. Sasibai shares that from witnessing a series of events through the years since childhood, it dawned on her how she wanted to do things. “When I was living in Cambodia, I saw how craftspeople could not make a living, as middlemen often squeezed their margins so much that many of them had abandoned weaving

altogether. I also met families who lost children to trafficking. These social injustices awakened an urge in me to begin a journey that would help address these issues,” she expresses. While many of her peers were busy climbing the corporate ladder, Sasibai was busy searching for ways to help marginalised communities. Here, she shares what’s next for Earth Heir and fighting for what she believes in.

HW: Earth Heir aims to do a lot of things, from preserving the hand-weaving tradition to protecting the ecosystem. How do you juggle it all and stay focused?

SK: “We are trying to ensure that every step of the sourcing, making and packaging of our products is as eco-friendly as possible and will also help individuals generate income. We are committed to working with natural fibres and materials that are biodegradable – but we have recently made an exception for one new product in our range. Our ‘Nelly’ bags are made with plastic strips as many of the weavers we spoke to said it is very hard for them to find rattan to weave. Because of this, we ask all our clients who buy this bag to return it if their bag needs repairing or if it is no longer usable. We will recycle or upcycle it – as long as it doesn’t end up in a landfill.”

HW: You support many causes, and they vary from one another. Can you share why they are important to you?

SK: “I met with families whose children were ‘adopted’, never to be seen again. Many poor families have sold their children or family members out of desperation and, sadly, sometimes out of greed. If we want to break this cycle, we need to be able to help them earn alternative incomes. As for fair wages, it is a no-brainer. This endless desire for cheap, mass-produced clothes demands that labour remains cheap and, often, exploitative. Large manufacturers move from country to country searching for ever-cheaper sources of labour.



Yes, it is helpful to these communities, but as a standard practice, companies need to at least ensure the working conditions and environment are safe and the workers are not being exploited.”

HW: How does Earth Heir aim to support non-profit organisations and maintain a profit at the same time?

SK: “We are not yet profitable as a business, but we continue to be committed to working ethically and fairly. We work with a network of non-governmental organisations, and also directly with craftspeople and high-end designers. We are happy to pay our craftspeople whatever they ask for as the money goes directly to them. We also work closely with the two charities we support to make sure the money we donate is used wisely and creates an impact.”

HW: What have you learnt since starting Earth Heir?

SK: “My biggest lesson since I started Earth Heir is humility. I realised that one should never think that one is too important or that any task is below them.”

HW: That’s a great step forward. Do you have any advice for the next generation?

SK: “I hope girls and women will know that they are not made (to be) less able, and that they are of great worth and value to society. I hope they will not validate themselves based on the opinions of others, and they will have inspirational female role models to emulate.”



Tiffany T Square bracelet in 18 karat yellow gold

Tiffany East West in stainless steel, quartz movement with a white dial on a black alligator strap

“I HOPE GIRLS AND WOMEN WILL KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT MADE (TO BE) LESS ABLE, AND THAT THEY ARE OF GREAT WORTH AND VALUE TO SOCIETY”

– Sasibai Kimis

TIFFANY & CO.