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Rugs to riches

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Decades ago, a young Nand Kishore Chaudhary started his journey as a manufacturer of hand-made carpets from Churu, a small town in Rajasthan. He set up Jaipur Carpets with just two looms and nine weavers. Now known as the Jaipur Rugs Company, it is valued at \$14 million and has 7,000 looms and a consolidated network of more than 40,000 artisans spanning eight states in the country. What's more, he is the country's largest manufacturer and exporter of hand-woven carpets and rugs and his carpets are exported to over 35 countries.

"Unlike the Kashmiri and Persian carpets, which focus on traditional colours and vintage designs, we have incorporated new designs and have modified colours to suit contemporary homes," states 56-year-old Chaudhary, Founder and Chairman, Jaipur Rugs Company, about the carpets unique selling point.

His company is globally known as a leader in hand-knotted silk carpets due to the finest hand-weaving skill displayed by the rural artisans.

However, what stands out for this Indian company is its unique business model. "We have created a direct link between the weavers and the markets of the rich," states Chaudhary. So, with no middleman in between the weavers



and the end-users, his company has been able to create a fair wage model for the artisans which helps to empower them, offering fair wages and integrating them into the production chain. Buyers, too, feel a sense of emotional connect when they realise that their money is going to a just cause that will help in the upliftment of the weavers' life.

It is this sensibility and approach towards the skilled, yet underpaid weavers and artisans that has been acclaimed by Harvard University. The company and Chaudhary's business enterprise has found itself featured as a case study in management guru and thinker (late) C.K.

Prahalad's book, *Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits*. The company has been cited as an example of a new business model, which helps in tackling world poverty.

Winner of the Ernst & Young 2010 Indian Entrepreneur of the Year Award, this initiative of Chaudhary has earned him accolades and has got him invitations to give lectures at esteemed universities like the Harvard Business School, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

With some of the biggest names as its clientele (the company's product adorns a pride of place in the White House), the Jaipur Rugs Company sure knows the way to connect India to the world. jaipurrugsc.com

Above: A bespoke Jaipur rug
Centre: Nand Kishore Chaudhary