

Meet the "creative caste" with Jaipur Rugs

"...no longer shall I weave a garment of pain..." Sant Kabir

These words of the weaver poet, Sant Kabir, echo in the hearts of rural women artisans, from the rustic villages of Rajasthan, as they rejoice their creative existence and resonate with the words of Mr. Nand Kishore Chaudhary (fondly called as NKC), founder of Jaipur Rugs who says "I want the world to celebrate the existence of immense creative potential that lies at the grassroots".

Jaipur Rugs aims at connecting the emotions of the weavers with the living spaces by showcasing the living stories behind hand knotted rugs. Jaipur Rugs brings to the cities, appreciation for art which is slowly dying from around the globe, the art of hand weaving rugs on a loom, knot by knot. Jaipur Rugs allows an immersion into the stories of the weavers to all its designers, buyers, end customers, students, academicians, policy-makers and anyone else who may be interested in having firsthand experience of a doorstep entrepreneurship model, where women weavers, mostly belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes work from the comfort of their homes and weave their lives with dignity and empowerment.

Through tales of this heart touching journey of rural women weavers there comes an opportunity to witness the happy human network behind the decentralized supply chain which is at the core of the Jaipur Rugs model.

One of the visitors at Jaipur Rugs recently remarked, "Never knew that so much goes into the making of a 'Kaleen', a Carpet, a 'Rug' or a 'Tapis'. I could never have imagined that rural women weave carpets with such ease and

speed and it is fascinating to note that they create designs with accuracy using their visual, mental and creative skills to guide them."

The Creative Caste While sitting on a "khaat" and sipping their special masala chai of the weavers with some of the weav-

hindrance in their endeavor to be creative. In fact what he realized was that they had gifted hands, gifted fingers, they were gifted with immense patience, immense creativity and in the real sense, they were gifted and blessed by God.

vivre' of these women carpet weavers who are shy at times, wrapped with simplicity, filled with confidence and a firm voice. One of the Bunkar Sakhi (literally a weaver's friend and a living example of the success of an ini-

tiative by Jaipur Rugs to de-

multitask and manage both personal and professional lives. Their identity today, their caste today, is not dependent on status, descent and roles that are fixed from birth and hereditary, but this creative caste has come into existence by their own creative and artistic skills.

The creative process Continuing to touch lives of women weavers Jaipur Rugs has encouraged its creative caste to design their own rugs now, under the Artisan Originals collection. These weavers with no formal design training or education now imbue each rug with their own individuality.

They weave upto 4,608 knots a day, bringing to life their design vision for art on the floor. The weavers allow their instincts to guide them towards varied design inspirations as their rug progresses. The rugs in this collection are handcrafted with reclaimed yarn belonging to random and mixed dye batches that remain as surplus and cannot be traced back. This makes each rug in this collection a sustainable solution for surplus management. Moreover the wool is handspun on a rudimentary 'Charkha' by over 2,500 women yarn spinners. A spinner can spin 1.2 kilometers long yarn in a day. Each rug goes through more than 80 processes and lives the concept of sustainability as it is made with natural fibers like wool and silk.

NKC believed in the talent of these women and hence a journey that started in 1978 gave birth to, as he so rightly mentions, "birth of the creative caste"

Weavers are now conscious of their skills and talents rather than the tag of their socio-economic back-

ground. This endeavor by Mr. Nand Kishore Chaudhary resulted in the upliftment of the weavers by giving them a chance for human equality and dignity.

With each shot of the Churri (cutting tool used by weavers), the women sever their dependence on men (sense of freedom), they sever the curse of abject poverty (by learning a new skill and alternate method of earning their livelihood), they sever the superstitions and severe servitude. Their tools and their skills have opened doors for these "artisans" who manage their time and put in the necessary efforts. These women appear as modern goddesses - the creative goddess whose hands carry the Churri, Panja and Kainchi. No wonder weavers like Sajna who has fought cancer or a Bugali who overcame the trauma of physical abuse and domestic violence have not only survived but are imparting their experiences to many.

Their art/inspiration Inspired by nature, or their own personal journey, these women capture intricate details on woolen rugs. Thousands of years of history, culture, and traditions are translated into inspiring art pieces with their magical skills.

Jaipur Rugs has been weaving threads of hope, confidence, communication, expression and identity, while connecting the whole community of this creative caste from 600 villages, to the living spaces of people in more than 45 countries. The looms of Jaipur Rugs bind the creative communities across India. The rugs not only fill the four corners of a room, they also are uniting the corners of the world, connecting lives and connecting creativity.



as, NKC led the journey of

Jaipur Rugs to a group of international buyers and said "a rug which brings warmth to a living space and grounds the floor with artistry, starts with a weaver who works from her home and creates it, knot by knot, month by month. The charka of change began with the installment of the first loom at my house, 30 years back. My purpose was simple, creating and serving the community of weavers. But due to the social stigma attached with the weavers, there was tremendous pressure on me from my family who wanted all collaboration with them to end. It was impossible and inconceivable to have them in our premises

The very fact of being stopped to work with the weavers got me more close to them."

NKC never saw the caste as a problem or

He realized the potential of these people and for him they were a mine of potential and talented people. He had a vision, a vision to see what the world was unable to see. He had a vision to nurture the creative potential of the women weavers at the grassroots and develop them.

It was then that his love for the weavers started and he realized that beyond the upper caste and lower caste, there exists the "creative caste".

His love with the weavers gave direction to the insurgent mission of Jaipur Rugs - bringing weavers art from their homes to consumers' homes and while nurturing the untapped creative potential at the grassroots, he realized that a "creative caste" has finally come to life.

Today, when visitors walk around these villages they get touched by the 'joie de

velop leadership at the grassroots) Prem Devi, from village Aaspura, shared her tales of joy with a visitor and said, "I am no longer afraid. Earlier I used to be shy but now I am happy, confident and most importantly, I feel respected. I was motivated to become an entrepreneur, to develop artistry and I was encouraged by the company to develop radical self-love."

Behind the story of Jaipur Rugs lies the creation and success of this "creative caste". Driven with passion and insurgency, Jaipur Rugs has been weaving magic in the world of handmade rugs.

One witnesses that the women weavers are gaining emotional, professional as well as financial stability. Making a living from their art is giving them dignity and a sense of pride on being women, and more importantly, an "earning woman". It is fascinating to discover how they now