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**A RUG STORY FROM JAIPUR**



IIID BANGALORE REGIONAL CHAPTER



INSTITUTE  
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DESIGNERS

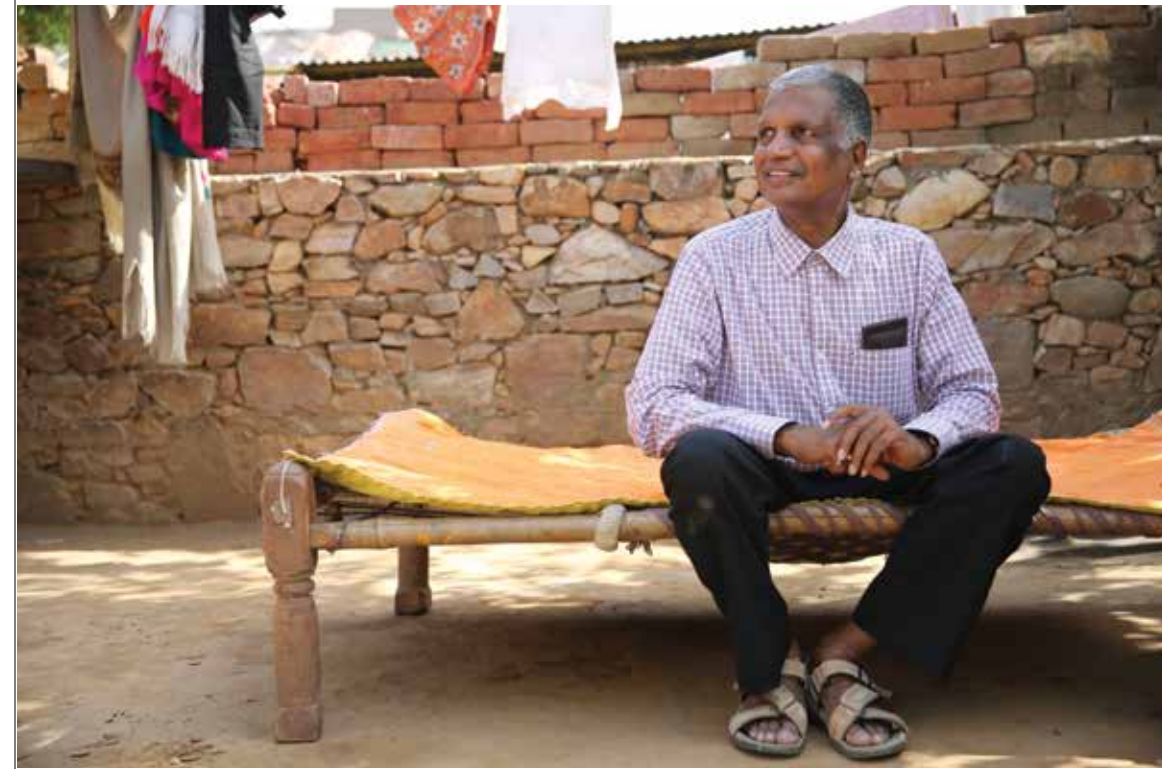
Bangalore Regional Chapter



# A RUG STORY FROM JAIPUR



It is an open thatched shack, the buffalo leisurely chewing the cud, squatting beside the rope cot; the ashes from the overnight cooking in the *Chula* shares this space even as the fourth corner of this muddy shack stretches to accommodate four colourfully veiled women busy on the loom. It is a scene in a remote village near Jaipur, the village women being the weavers of some of the most exotic carpets that India produces and proudly exports to 45 countries across the world.



*Nand Kishore Chaudhary*

As we step into this muddy shack to take a closer look at the weaving, four bright faces, the veils yanked up, the smiles spreading from ear to ear, peep curiously through the cotton warp. The warmth and love is infectious, drawing us closer not just to the weaving process but directly into each of their hearts, their enchanting faces, the easy laughter, the brightly coloured veils and skirts captivating, pulling us like an irresistible magnet.

It is an open scene, an incredible manifestation of women empowerment, the illiterate village women now viewing the world with a new found confidence, borne out by the skill learnt, the work giving them the sense of independence and pride, the adult education releasing them from ignorance and subjugation. It is a story of reviving traditional skills, creating economic independence, bringing about a healthier, happier life. It is a story of exquisite rugs and one man's dream, a dream that not only became a reality but grew wings to fly high and fly beyond the borders of this country.

## IT IS THE STORY OF JAIPUR RUGS

### DEFYING CONVENTIONS

He was barely 19 and had just finished his graduation. The year was 1978, a time when untouchability continued to reign silently in the villages even though it was technically abolished and punishable; the year when **Nand Kishore Chaudhary, Chairman and Managing Director, Jaipur Rugs** realised the magnitude of this social evil still plaguing our society.

Young Nand Kishore Chaudhary's first tryst with the social evil happened when he accompanied his photographer friend to take pictures of the artworks done by the scheduled tribe communities in the remote villages close to Jaipur. The trip was to alter forever what NKC, as he is fondly referred to, wanted to do with his life. The journey had begun; the journey which would be fraught with many hurdles and oppositions, but one which would not be given up till the dream was realised. A journey that would pitch NKC four decades later into a family of 40,000 artisans spread over 600 villages coming from 5 states, where 85 per cent of this family were women.

When NKC shunned his lucrative bank job and instead took up training this marginalised section of the society to weave, he had two looms and nine artisans to work with, from the premises of his own home. Braving disapproval and resistance from both family and neighbours, he persisted with his firm belief in love, integrity and human values, only to taste success with his venture soon enough to silence his critics. The numbers soon climbed steadily, both weavers and the orders, the business strengthening to eventually have a global reach.

**JOURNEYING INTO THE VILLAGES**

Traditionally the carpet industry worked through middlemen who would contract work to the weavers in the villages who were invariably paid either a pittance or at times none at all. The entry of NKC into carpet manufacturing robbed the middlemen of their role, creating severe resistance; another barrier that NKC had to contend with and break through. Yet, breakthrough he certainly did, earning the trust of the women weavers who received training as well as adult education, health and hygiene, propelling them to soon become award winners, culminating in one of them travelling to Europe to receive an international award.

Interestingly, given the training and manner of approach adopted by **Jaipur Rugs** in both weaving as well as the weavers, a strong sense of emotional connect to the rugs is established by the weaver, where weaving goes beyond the purpose of earning a living. The heart and soul getting involved in its creation physically alters the product, the designs coming up not just as a response to a set pattern assigned but one that stems from the mind, delving into the depths of emotions, experience, expectations, the emerging finished rug more a manifestation of the weaver's individuality.

Given that 85 per cent of the weavers are women, where these women are physically experiencing a sense of empowerment, the economic independence as well as the exposure and confidence realised inadvertently seeps into the weaving, the creativity, quality and precision of work peaking. Bimla Devi, Shanti, Sajna, Bugali are just a few names that come up on the long list of achievers who have left their indelible mark on **Jaipur Rugs**.

A trip to the weavers' villages can be totally enthralling, unforgettable experience, where one gets to rub shoulders with the buffaloes and goats as much as one interacts with the team of weavers working on the looms in each household. While most houses have just one loom or perhaps two, a few have more, like the enterprising Shanti, who faced utter poverty and was illiterate to begin with, starting out with one loom initially. This has now grown to 6 looms with 20 women at work, where she coordinates not only the six looms, but her weaving skills and adult literacy propelling her to keep tabs on quality of work too.

The attractive aspect of the entire weaving process is the raw material finding the way to weavers' houses on time, the finished product picked up, the orders and designs given for execution while the quality control supervisor does her daily rounds to monitor stringent quality that meets the highest international standards. Prospective customers are also taken to visit the weavers and personally come up with their designs, thus bringing in total customisation and individuality to the final rug woven. The women weavers are in turn saved the hassle of travel, the work timings picked to suit their household routine and doubling up where need be to meet urgent orders and deadlines.

*Carding Process***VARIETIES ON OFFER**

While **Jaipur Rugs** has a range of carpets on offer to satisfy the varied tastes and exacting needs of its elite customer base, the rugs sold are essentially pure woollen or silk and wool mixed, with all of them woven on cotton warp. The wool used is spun using a traditional Charkha in Bikaner. Interestingly, every rug goes through 180 hands, starting from spinning the wool yarn to the final finish lent before they are packaged for sale. This lengthy process thus takes the total number of artisans at work in the company at different stages of the rug to 40,000.

**Jaipur Rugs** adopts the Persian knot in its weaving though the designs, colours and patterns that pan out on these exotic rugs are totally original, emerging either directly from the expert weaver or from the designers' desk, besides the customised options offered based on specific designs ordered by customers.

While **Jaipur Rugs** is into hand knotted and hand tufted weaving techniques, the premium range of its pure silk rugs incorporate 196 knots in one square inch. **Jaipur Rugs** thus has a stunning range on offer, where each range has its own unique characteristic and design that sets it apart, professing the expert skills of the weaver and the designer.

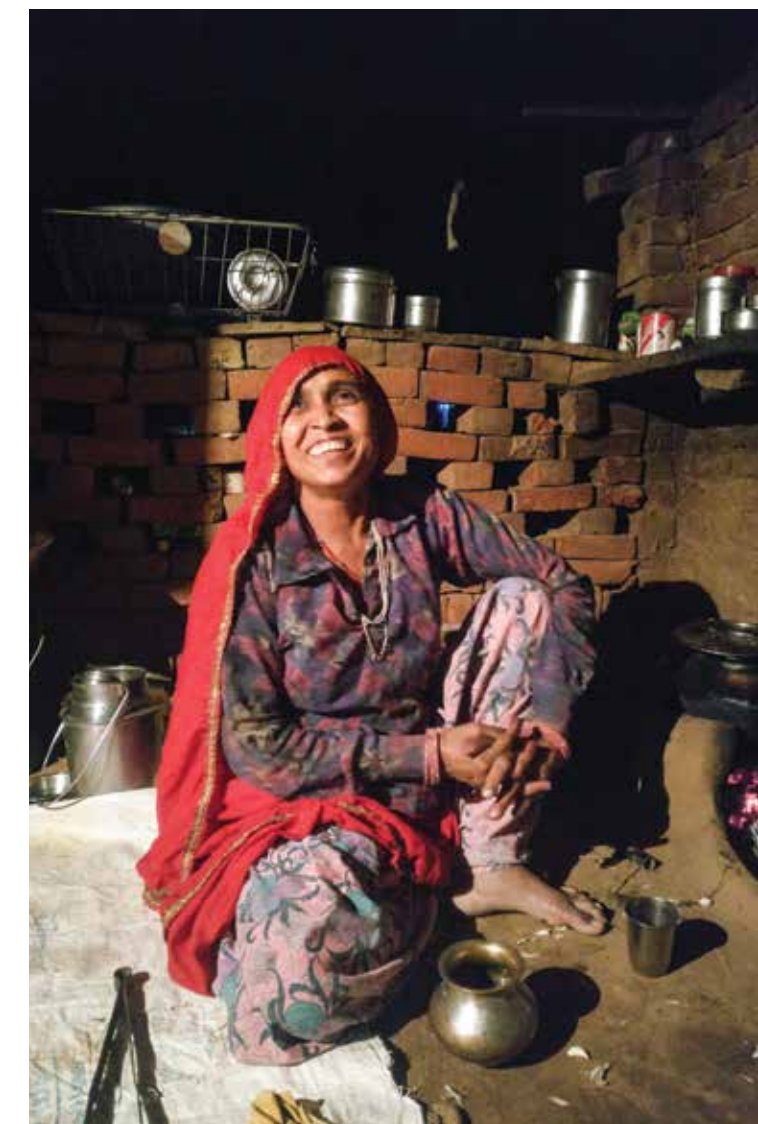
*Couple Weaving. Photo Credit: Mahesh Chadaga***ARTISAN ORIGINAL COLLECTION**

It is something that the rural illiterate weavers, housed in the remote villages of Rajasthan, never contemplated. It is an experiment that one never expected to emerge as such a spectacular show of creativity and craftsmanship. It is certainly one of a kind initiative by **Jaipur Rugs** where the weavers are permitted to come up with their own designs, each evolving as a masterpiece in design and inspiration.

The Artisan Original rugs, as the name proclaims, are woven purely from the imagination of the weaver, spontaneously as the weaving progresses. The rugs in this collection, which is part of a sustainable initiative by **Jaipur Rugs**, incorporate over two lakh knots, reflecting the experience, emotions, dreams, personality, observation, inclinations of the master weaver at work. Totally unique, one of a kind, these rugs in most cases cannot be replicated.

Being a product of inspiration born out of the simplicity of their surroundings as well as the complexity of their minds, the award winning Artisan Original collection is highly sought after by art lovers across the globe. Given the stark reflection of the thought process of the weaver in these rugs, the customer purchasing the rug has a fair insight into the individual weaver's life.

Incidentally, all the rugs in this collection are woven out of the hand-spun, left over yarn from the supply chain, making the colour palette equally unique as its design, besides ensuring there is zero waste of the yarn supplied. Each of these rugs are sold with their unique story and name of the weaver tagged to the rug, giving the weavers ownership as well as recognition for their creation.

*Sajna. Photo Credit: Mahesh Chadaga***ARTISAN ORIGINAL BY SAJNA**

Fifty five year old cancer survivor **Sajna's** creation is a case in point. Her Artisan Original rug, which she calls Sona Bageecha, is centred around three motifs that she found in the x-ray of her abdomen detecting the tumour. Taking this as the central theme, Sajna wove a garden around with floral motifs. The garden was one that she constantly gazed at through the window in the hospital as she lay in her cot, recovering from cancer. Yet another rug was woven by her with pyramid logos where she relates the slopes of the pyramid to the varying cycles of life, of ups and downs, with the peak pointing to eternity into which everything merges. Sajna christened this deep philosophical rug as Complex. For Sajna, weaving is akin to meditation, transporting her to a state of nirvana. So far, Sajna has 6 Artisan Original rugs to her credit.



Bugali

**ARTISAN ORIGINAL BY BUGALI**

The once shy **Bugali** who has now transformed into an extremely chirpy twenty one year old, is equally deft in coming up with her own designs, having woven over 8 Artisan Original rugs already, with more on the way. Her patterns reflect block structures, incorporate designs that are so complex and fine that the knots cannot be traced and replicated. With majority of her designs inspired by Leheriya, the motifs can be anything that strikes her, be it a bangle box, a date plant, a camel, a mug, yet all reflecting her jest for life.

The emerging patterns neither reflect a traditional design nor a contemporary setting but merely speak of the character of the weaver at work. So sure is Bugali about her work and quality that she remarks “When the human senses work together it creates energy that is unstoppable” even as she indicates to the quality supervisor checking her work to stay out! Given her innate sense in weaving and the intricacy of her work, **Jaipur Rugs** decided to archive four of her Artisan Original rugs, a silent salute to her weaving expertise.

**ARTISAN ORIGINAL BY BIMLA DEVI**

Kamal, the Artisan Original rug woven by **Bimla Devi** was amongst the final nominees for the category, ‘Best Traditional Design 2017’ at the Carpet Design Award 2017. The Carpet Design Award is considered

as the Oscar of carpet industry. Bimla Devi is also the recipient of **German Design Award Winner 2018**.

Interestingly, Bimla, when she set about to weaving the rug, could think of nothing significant to bring into her rug. “That is when the breakfast snack Shakarpara came into my mind and decided to bring that into the rug”, she says. Thus emerged a vibrant rug with random floral and pyramid patterns around a traditional breakfast dish of Rajasthan! It is a different matter that an award was the last thing she expected when she set about infusing these patterns that came into her mind as she wove.

Being uneducated and hailing from a background where none of her family or friends had even travelled so far as Delhi, the entire experience of travelling to Germany, receiving the award was, needless to say, an unforgettable life experience. The insecure fearful weaver who made the overseas trip is a far cry from the confident artisan who now greets visitors and prospective customers.

As of date, over 110 Artisan Original rugs have been made by various weavers from across the 600 villages in the five states where **Jaipur Rugs** has made its footprint.



Bimla Devi (Extreme Right).



Kavita Chaudhary

**DESIGNS BY KAVI**

While the rugs woven, be it pure silk, bamboo silk, woollen or a combination of wool and silk, essentially come either in contemporary or traditional designs depending on the artisan at work or the specific order requirement, the designs executed by **Kavita Chaudhary, Design Director, Jaipur Rugs**, come in a language of their own.

A graduate from School of The Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) Kavita draws her inspiration from the rich heritage of her childhood homes in rural India, combining it with the impressions gathered through her numerous travels across the world. A painter, rug designer and curator, Kavita’s designs serve as a symbol of beauty in thought and action.

*“I have always wanted to combine art and design with utility in the same method that fashion design combines aesthetics with function. By using the space on the floor, a rug becomes both a canvas and an inevitable piece of art in the living space”,* elaborates Kavita on her design sense. Her award winning range such as the Chaos Theory, Unstring, Project Error, is designed to suit the contemporary décor and modern sentiments of customers where a set pattern involving traditional motifs is not particularly sought after.



Project Error by Kavita Chaudhary



Gultarash

**EMBOSSSED EFFECT**

Much sought after for the designs and skill involved, the Gultarash or embossed effect requires precision and expertise of the highest order where the silk and wool woven carpets are sent to the finishing factory for a fine round of snipping of the wool, resulting in the silk motifs emerging as independent embossed patterns on the rug. Here, highly skilled artisans snip the wool around the motifs and patterns, where the background is cut clean, permitting the silk motifs to surface as engravings. Since the patterns woven are extremely intricate, it requires high level of concentration and skill to execute the task, resulting in some of the finest range of handcrafted silk and woollen carpets.

**FINISHING MATTERS**

Every carpet makes its way here. The finishing centre gives the final touches to the rug, catapulting it to the range of some of the finest rugs produced, both nationally and internationally. The finishing involves 18 major processes; all executed by hand once the rug is off the loom. It starts with the counting of the knots per square inch, the size of the carpet as ordered, proceeds to detecting defects if any and painstakingly rectifying them by using the skills of expert craftsmen. After this laborious process of measurement and rectification of defects, the carpet is subject to a lengthy Suabirai process involving segregating every warp to heighten the clarity of the designs.

The next stage involves thorough washing of the rug to remove mud and stains. The washed rug is then air-dried on frames. The final stage involves snipping the extra warp and binding the edges. If an embossed or Gultarash rug is on order, the dexterous clipping of the wool in the rug to let the silk motifs emerge, happens next. The finished carpet is then packaged and ready for sale.



Washing Process