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» 'be Unapologetically You' Is This Leader's Mantra To Growth

'Be Unapologetically You' Is This Leader's Mantra To Growth

by **Shraddha Kamdar** (<https://www.femina.in/author/shraddha-kamdar>) | Feb 9, 2023, 11:44 IST

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“When I first came on board as director of the company, I knew that I had some large shoes to fill,” says Rutvi Chaudhary, Director at Jaipur Rugs, one of India’s largest manufacturers of handmade rugs. The company was started back in 1978 by Nand Kishore Chaudhary, who had given up his secure bank job and borrowed Rs 5,000 from his father to start his carpet business.

“My goal was to honour the company’s founder (her father-in-law) and his legacy,” she says. Which is why she approached her role by focusing on strengthening the relationships between company and the people it serves. She specifically made sure to connect with the people on the frontline and those directly impacted by their services. This enabled her to better handle her role of leading retail sales and marketing. She’s brought on board collaborations with some of the biggest names in the design and décor space and has accelerated growth in the business.



Artisan Connect

The journey of the company that began with two looms, nine weavers and one scooter in Rajasthan has seen many milestones over the years, including the start of exporting the rugs (now covering 80 countries), the setting up of a sister company in the US and winning several accolades and awards. The most recent ones are setting up of flagship stores in Mumbai, Milan and Bengaluru in the last three years. And this could not have been possible with the direct involvement of the artisans who weave the beautiful carpets.

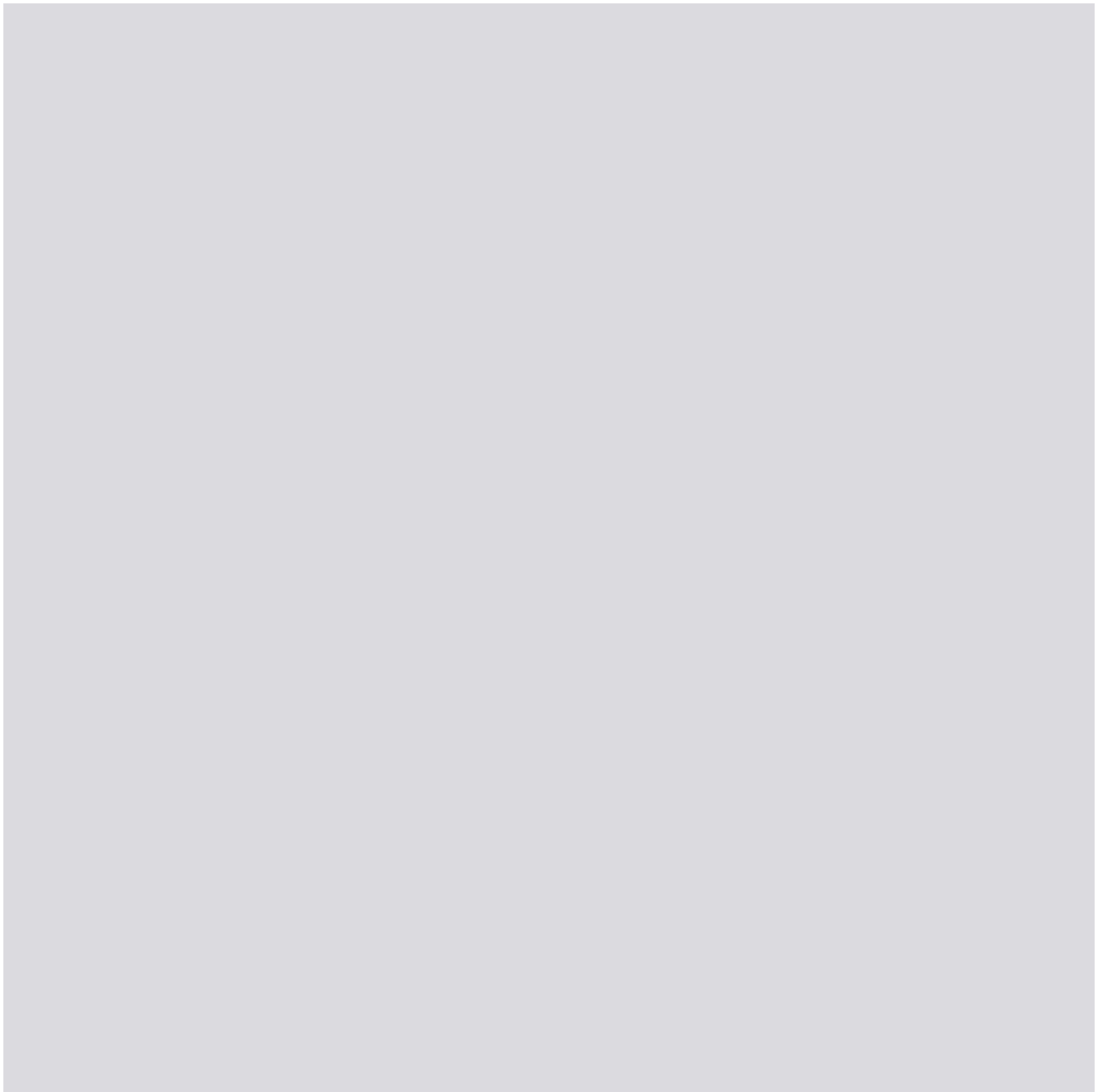
The organisation impacts over 40,000 artisans across 600 villages in five states, who work in the comfort of their homes. Steps are taken to ensure that they have a safe, secure, and comfortable workspace, besides the direction and help they need. “At every village, there is one Quality Head, a ‘*Bunkar Sakhi*’ (weaver friend), and Branch Managers

to guide the artisans with each requirement of theirs,” Rutvi informs.



Artisans working at home

Having worked with artisans from various backgrounds over the years, one thing that Rutvi has noticed is the strong sense of family they have. Whenever she is at their workshops, they always make her feel very welcome, like she is a part of the family. “One of my favourite moments is when they insist I dress like an Indian *bahu*. They always want me to wear a *bindi*, anklets, *chuda* and *sindoor*. It’s such a sweet gesture and makes me feel so fortunate that they think of me as one of their own,” she narrates.



Bestselling designs

Designer Collaborations

Rutvi has overseen and enabled several strategic collaborations with big names in the design and décor space, with names such as Matteo Cibic, Gauri Khan, Tania and Sandeep Khosla, Luli Sanchez, Hiren Patel, Abin Chaudhary, Artemis, Ashiesh Shah and KAVI. “For us, every collaboration with a designer is a way to disrupt the line between established patterns in the industry,” Rutvi says. It is the company’s way of showcasing the semblance between art and design. “Almost all the designers we work with come with a legacy and are instrumental in redesigning the concept of luxury,” she mentions.

One of her most memorable experiences, Rutvi remembers, was with designer Shantanu Garg during his visits. “We often talked about rug designs and he eventually asked me to come to Hyderabad to help design a house. I was hesitant, but he insisted. I decided to

take a chance and it ended up being a great decision! It was a fantastic experience to explore my creativity and design skills,” she speaks of the opportunity.



Weaving Stories

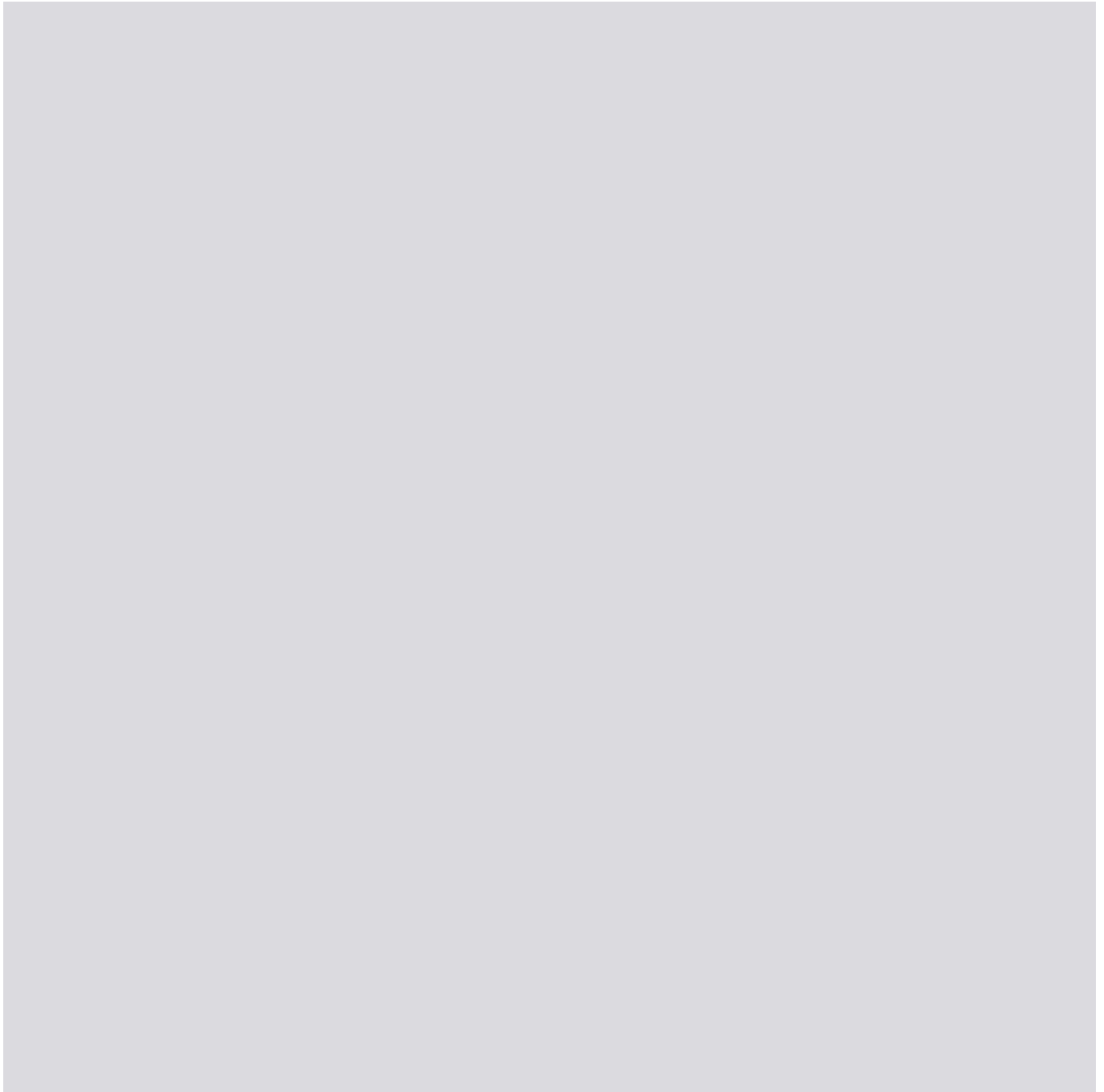
Rutvi says that they believe that when customers purchase a rug, they are not just buying a product, but a story. “We strive to preserve the traditional craftsmanship, the culture, and beauty of India in each rug. The customers are buying a piece of art, as well as a blessing for their home. Every rug represents the family blessings, love, and care that go into creating each piece.

That also brings her to the initiative **Manchaha**, that they have launched in recent years.

Manchaha, which means “expression of my heart”, is an initiative under which weavers get to design their own rug. The idea is to tap into the untamed creative potential in rural

India and nurture it. “Each rug, handmade with over two lakh knots, is the story of its creator – with emotions, dreams, and personality,” Rutvi tells us. Through the initiative rural men and women with, at best, the absolute basics of education, have stunned the world with original designs matching professional calibre. It has renewed their passion for weaving, given them self-confidence and recognition from their own communities. They have discovered themselves in a way they had never imagined. The project has facilitated the economic transformation of weavers who used to work as mere wage earners.

The initiative has also extended to the the long-term prisoners of Jaipur, Bikaner and Dausa Jails as Freedom Manchaha, wherein they get to design their own rug spontaneously on the loom. They use hand-spun leftover yarn in carpet production which cannot be used afresh. “This also reduces industry-wide wastage and makes the colour palette as unique as the design, apart from being sustainable,” Rutvi says.



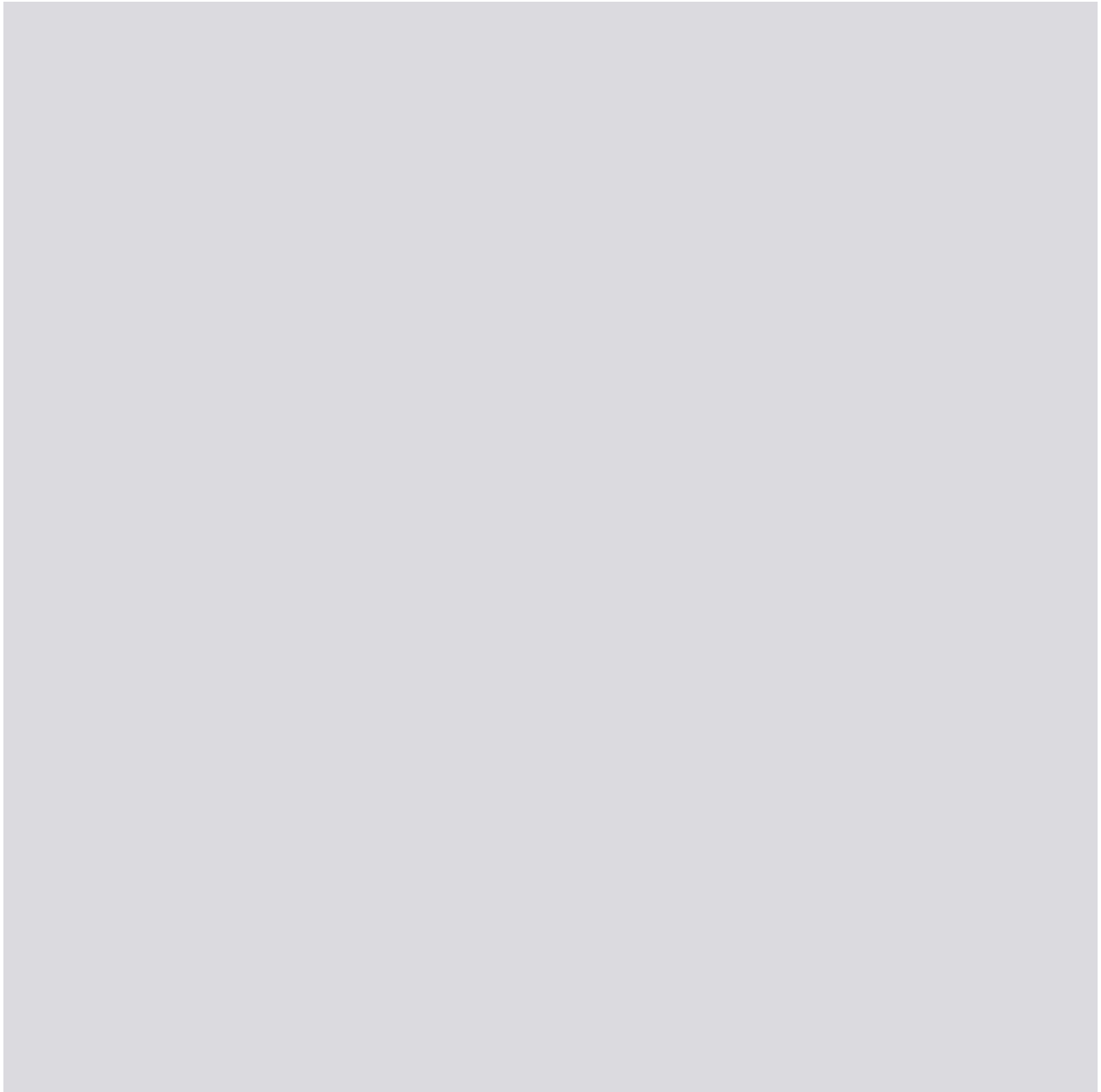
Manchaha weavers

Challenges and Inspiration

The role is not devoid of its challenges but Rutvi is not one to shy away from them. “When I need inspiration, I look to my family, friends, and the people around me. I’m inspired by those who are striving to make the world a better place. I draw strength from their courage, determination, and selflessness. I’m also inspired by stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, by reading books, articles or watching movies that demonstrate how someone overcame seemingly insurmountable odds. Finally, I turn to meditation and prayer for guidance and reflection on how I can make a difference,” she tells us.

The young leader, who likes to listen to calming and soulful music, also turns to painting

and other artistic activities to unwind. “Taking a walk in the park or going for a hike in the mountains can also be a great way for me to unplug myself and take in the beauty of nature,” she says with a smile.



Getting ready to be woven

Parting Shot

“Never limit yourself to dreaming of success but rather take action and make it happen,” is Rutvi’s message for aspiring young female leaders. “You can set your own rules and standards for success. Don’t be afraid to take risks and make bold decisions that will shape the future for yourself and for generations to come. Challenge the status quo, think outside the box, and be unafraid to express yourself in ways that empower you and others. Lead with strength, compassion, and integrity. Be brave, be fearless, and be unapologetically you.”

Images courtesy Jaipur Rugs

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