

Humanising Management

Transformation through Human Values



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Community Service as a Human Value and Institution Building: A Study of Jaipur Rugs Company, Jaipur

Servanthood is the chief modifier of the power implicit in all leadership. — a quality of innerness, an attribute of soul that checks the corruptibility of power Real power is always an exchange of leadership to use power to call out the God-given power of others.

— Bennett J. Sims

The title, or at least a part of it, of this chapter could as well have been 'Power of ONE'. It is about a person without any affluence, high education or political or social connections. What distinguishes him from others is unflinching faith in the basic goodness of others; and an obsession to help the weaving community come up in their lives. Nand Kishore Chaudhary, the Founder Director of Jaipur Rugs Co. Pvt. Ltd., Jaipur had in fact to pay a price. This was in terms of severe upheavals in the growth of the company.

Instead of losing faith in others, he became selective in trusting others. Families of weaving community spread over the country are closely involved with his company. Since they belong to the lowest strata of society, Chaudhary thought, it is his responsibility to help them come up in their lives as a token to his appreciation to their contribution. As a result, the company has become a world-class leader and Chaudhary has become a legion in terms of receiving accolades from his fellow industry men and academicians from different parts of the world.

Before we hear the institution builder, we may have an idea on what the institution building is.

16.1 Institution Building: A Perspective

The quality of institutions and its leaders in the given country is considered as a measure of the potential and actual level of its growth. M.J. Robinson, for instance, states that “Everyday society must teach itself and its young, that its basic values are good, and its institutions are appropriate for achieving those values. In other words, each society, pluralistic, or monolithic, must peddle legitimacy, it is this belief in and commitment to the values and institutions – it is legitimacy – that allows a nation to transcend brief crises or endure long periods of deprivation.” The number, emergence, range, and functioning are some of the issues which are involved in the process of institution building. As can be noted, such institution building is closely related to concepts like management like planning, organizing, directing and controlling, as also functional aspects of management like production, finance, marketing and personnel, it has a close bearing with management. To the extent, institution building involves creation of an institution with the required vision, commitment, conviction, and risk taking attitude, institution building has a built in component of Entrepreneurship.

Finally, to the extent it is the quality of leadership particularly at the apex level – which becomes instrumental in the creation, functioning, and growth of the given institution; institution building is equally organically related to leadership. It may perhaps be appropriate to quote, in this context, R. Baum Hart, S.J. who stated that usually a company is the lengthened shadow of one man- the chief executive. One can thus note that the concept of institution building is almost co extensive with the concepts of management, entrepreneurship and leadership. I however, do feel that institution building is something different and broader phenomenon. Based on whatever little experience I have in being associated with the building of a department of an institution of higher learning, I believe that institution building involves an eternal struggle between balancing contradictory objectives.’

- ☐ Vision vs. Pragmatism;
- ☐ Conviction vs. Adaptivness;
- ☐ Commitment vs. Self-sacrifice;
- ☐ Idealism vs. Flexibility;
- ☐ Perfectionism vs. One man show; and
- ☐ Institution vs. Individual.

We will find several of the above issues and dilemmas faced by Chaudhary and his organisation Jaipur Rugs in the pages to follow.

16.2 The Institution Builder: An Autobiographical Retrospective

Meet Nanda Kishore Chaudhary, the proponent of this chapter. Let us have him in his own words. "I will start this note with an important event in my life that I still remember. I was studying B. Com. in Lohia College, Churu (Rajasthan). One day one of our professors while reading the role numbers in class asked me to stand up as he read my role number. This professor was known to be a hard taskmaster and strict disciplinarian. I was not sure why I was asked to stand up and got bit scared. The professor said that this boy will become a big business man one day. He opened my examination answer sheet and read out aloud the definition of the 'business' that I had written in that answer sheet. I had written, "Business is next to love. It is creator and preserver of civilizations." This was my first thought and understanding about business world. I accepted this definition as it is till date. I was just 20 years old then.

I remember one more event that occurred even before this. I was 18 years old then and was studying in college. My father was cloth merchant. I was used to sit at times with him in his shop. One day my college librarian visited the shop and bought some cloths on credit from me. After few days he again came back and bough some more cloths on credit with the promise that he would make full payment when he receives his next salary. But he did not make the due payment even after passing of many days. This made me really sad and I was bit depressed. My father was not at all happy with me. I was a very simple person who was used to trust every person.

I made a similar mistake in 2006 also. I was suffering from Urine Infection. One person whom I was used to trust very much asked for Rs. 2 lacs from me assuring that he would get me the right treatment for this infection. But he cheated with me and ran away with the money.

■ Diagnosis

As I went along I came across many good and bad incidents. These incidents helped me to deepen understanding of life. With every failure I made a promise to myself to try to understand the human nature. I attended many HR seminars, interacted with professional experts, read autobiographies, many other books and magazines. This helped me understand me how to manage my relation with others. I distanced myself from people who were not trustworthy. I shared my experiences with my children and tried to educate them about different

aspects of a business. Along with my children, I tried to involve many honest and dedicated people with me in my business.

■ Discovery

The one understanding that I have reached to is that there is no better decision than 'team-decision'. Team brings Collective Wisdom in any decision. .

I have also improved on my capability of selecting right people for my business. Few days back I along with a team was interviewing a candidate for the position of accountant. I felt that he is trying to hide something. When we did a background check of that candidate we came to know his record was very negative in the last company.

■ Development

When I was 5 years old, I was used to trust every human being. I still trust every human but with some constructive thought and analysis. In my younger days I was not good in analysis. By analysis I mean an ability to identify the right individual. This was my weakness. I was not good in selecting right individual with whom I should work. But on the other side my trust on every human being helped me to reach where I have reached today. I loved and trusted my weavers, customers and employees. This love and trust has brought me and my company where we are today. The decisions that I was used to take myself are now being arrived at through a capable team.

From my childhood only, I never liked the ostentatious and deceptive nature of People. I never liked people of such nature and they also did not like me. When I was just 14 years old that time I was used to talk of value in business rather than profit. Many people that time said about me that I will never be able to make any money. They were used to preach me about concentrating on profit not value. When I was getting married around the age of 25, I refused to ask for Dowry. This made my parents very angry. Similar incidents distanced me from my family members. Finally I became indifferent to them.

My father was into business and mother was home maker. I have one brother and four sisters.

Today one of the biggest challenge in front of me is to incorporate social values and ideals in my business that I have learnt and follow myself. I want to establish these values as a work culture in my company so that every individual in my company could become a decision maker."

16.3 His Basic Beliefs

1. Love is ultimate value in our society but without market label, price and tagging system. It has been a part of Values. On the other hand, commitment comes from love and affection, always.
2. In the present market scenario, love seems a secondary part of life.
3. We have to start the work with ourselves – that means self analysis; and then acceptance comes automatically. By analyzing ourselves, we can see the world as it is. This is the only thing that makes the difference.
4. HR does the work like a mother, who knows everything about her child without asking anymore.
5. Finally, values are the roots of every business.

16.4 The Growth of the Company

The company has gone through two phases since its inception in 1978 and is currently going through the third phase.

- The First Phase (1978–1986) when the company was engaged in job work.
- The Second Phase (1986–1999), when the focus was on exports done through previous company Exports.
- The Third Phase (1999–till date), when the organisation assumed the role of 'Intrapreneurship'. Through Jaipur Rugs Foundation, the company offers training to the needy young ambitious and talented youngsters and encourages and supports them to stand on their own feet.

The tables (on page 146) provide phase wise data on sales, production, no. of branches, employees and artisan's. The tables reveal that the growth has been phenomenal – an increase between 7 to 8 folds in terms of sales revenue and production area. More important however, is the sense of pride in ones own worth instilled in the artisans and trainers in carpet weaving.

16.5 Service to the Weaving Community

In a document entitled 'Case Studies', the company recounts success stories of four individuals and their families belonging to the weaving community. These case studies reinforce what has been stated above regarding instilling self pride in the ambitious but struggling youth in search of their real worth to themselves and to others.

Particulars	Job Work	Phase 1 Previous Company Export	Jaipur Rugs	Job Work	Phase 2 Previous Company Export	Jaipur Rugs	Job work	Phase 3 Previous Company Export	Jaipur Rugs
Avg. Sales (Rs. in Lacs)	2.89	376.22	855.37	20.48	1167.78	1813.12	109.73	2539.03	3798.05
Avg. No. of Branches	1	7	1	3	9	6	5	10	13
Avg. Production (Sq. Ft)	962	107490	123571	5983	333650	426367	31350	741438	900150
Avg. No. of Employees	1	54	31	6	53	135	22	214	145
Avg. No. of Artisan	15	1278	6125	84	3517	11000	415	7050	19967
Phase Wise Comparison									
Particulars	Job Work (1978 to 1986)			Previous Company Export (1986 to 1999)			Jaipur Rugs (1999 to till date)		
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Avg. Sales (Rs.in Lacs)	2.89	20.48	109.73	376.22	1167.78	2539.03	855.37	1813.12	3798.05
Avg. No. Of Branches	1	3	5	7	9	10	1	6	13
Avg. Production (Sq. Ft)	962	5983	31350	107490	333650	741438	123571	426367	900150
Avg. No. of Employees	1	6	22	54	53	214	31	135	145
Avg. No. of Artisan	15	84	415	1278	3517	7050	6125	11000	19967

Entrepreneur as a Job Work – 1978 to 1986

Entrepreneur as an Export – 1986 to 1999

Entrepreneur as an Intrapreneur – 1999 to till date

These success stories are about the youngsters with social inhibitions, economic deprivation and lack of freedom for girls. During their struggles they came to know about Jaipur Rugs Foundation and were trained and provided with looms to be economically independent and support their kith and kin.

The document is appended at the end of the book.

16.6 Nomination of the Nanda Kishore Chaudhary and his Company, Jaipur Rugs Co. Pvt. Ltd. for the Spandan IBA Award, 2007

On invitation from Spandan, Nanda Kishore Chaudhary, participated in the annual award on Human Values for Professionals, in 2007, instituted by Spandan, in collaboration with the Indian Business Academy (IBA), Greater Noida, India. The write up submitted by Chaudhary, along with the nomination for the award is reproduced below, and offers further insights into his personality and functioning.

■ Our Values and Humanity by Nand Kishore Chaudhary

Bill Clinton, once rightly said, “As we become ever more diverse, we must work harder to unite our common values and our common humanity”. I was once a witness to the downfall of my own business that I had set up after years of struggle and sacrifices. My instant reaction was – How could it be? Life throws up challenges at times that we cannot understand. Today, if you ask me the meaning of business, I would describe it as any activity that is divine and is a source of knowing your inner self. Once we know, who we really are, we can enlighten the stakeholders of the business.

With time, I realized the points of connections in my business – the end users and the weavers. Having reached a stage today, where I easily claim that Jaipur Rugs Co. Pvt. Ltd., is a world class leader in rug category, it took me years to identify the missing the element: *the element* of weaver’s joy and customer’s satisfaction. The philosophy that crawled its way inside me was – find yourself through losing yourself!

From the very beginning, I had seen this industry fragmented. There were gaps in terms of availability of skilled labour and the middlemen never helped these weavers. These men of god went poorer day by day not even realizing their true potential of getting a sustained living. There were times when these weavers who knew the art very well were unemployed for a very long time because the middlemen did not have contracts to give them.

When I was a child, I always wanted to see a community of equal opportunities where everyone earned what they deserved and had a sustained livelihood. Today, Jaipur Rugs, follows a social entrepreneurship model, wherein , each weaver who gets in touch with us, earns considerably well in the industry; is aware of schemes or government aids and is groomed to be a future leader. I have learned from my experiences to see the world as it is, rather than applying my own set of assumptions and perceptions to survive.

Conscientiousness is the characteristic I improved upon. To understand what a customer wants and link it with a weaver's agony has a long journey. The same is imbibed within the organisational culture. From a departmental head, who takes strategic decisions to a labour that transports rugs from different centers, all of this are on the stage of learning to understand the two connections that I have stated. Once this is strived, processes automatically become efficient and by the end of the day, we keep both, weavers and customers happy.

It is more important to know what your customer thinks, where does he think, who will produce, how will he produce and how can we help them link. Through our social initiative, Jaipur Rugs Foundation, we have touched more than, 40,000 lives across 10 states in India. It is not about providing employment to the underprivileged or unemployed youths, but developing them to see their own future in the industry. Virtues of self discipline and hard work always help one to find success. However, I believe that it is the journey of success which is important and not the end result.

Now that we have a huge network of weavers and are still growing on the mission to develop a secure community, I look back and think: is it the revenues that matter or thousand smiles on these faces? The answer has been given by all these weavers who dedicatedly knot beautiful and elegant rugs. Their consistency in deliverance and their sheer determination to meet deadlines state how much they care about what they deliver. Some weavers are now entrepreneurs in their villages and this is our very next step. We are developing true leaders who will some day change the future of this industry. Thus, if we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those values that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control. With this, I believe that human values are not a matter of discussion but a constant endeavour of practice.

16.7 Awards and Recognition

- In the year 1993–94 received Gold Medal from Ministry of Textiles.
- In the year 1998–99 received Gold Memento from Ministry of Textiles.
- In the year 2003–04 received Export Excellence award from Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

- In the year 2005–06 received Gold Memento from Ministry of Textiles.
- In the Year 2008–09 received Udyog Ratna Award from former Governor of Tamilnadu and Assam.

■ Invitations

Nov 15th, 2008: Lecture on Social Entrepreneurship at Wharton School, the University of Pennsylvania USA.

Nov 17th, 2008: Lecture on Social Entrepreneurship at University of Michigan USA.

March 16th, 2009: J.K. Business School, Gurgaon (Haryana) as Guest faculty.

March 25th, 2009: Amity University, Jaipur as Guest faculty.

Frequent Participation in CII & AIMA, Institutions like IILM, Jaipur, IRMA Gujarat etc.

16.8 A Personal Note

The author knows Nand Kishore Chaudhary since 2001, when Chaudhary associated himself with *Spandan* for introducing value orientation in his organisation. As an individual he is simple, unassuming and open, this gets reflected in his interactions with his family, his employees and other. What distinguishes him further is his spiritual attitude towards men and matter. He has a tendency to look beyond his family and company interests. Another important trait in him is his lack of rancor, even towards those who have harmed him in the past. This is reflected in the re-employment of a family member in a key position, who was instrumental in the downfall of his company in the past.

Finally, his vision is reflected in his current endeavors of imparting training to deserving persons in carpet weaving through Jaipur Rugs Foundation and promoting research at international level on orientation of values in the society.

Appendix: Success Stories of Weavers – appended after Epilogue.



Appendix to Chapter 16: Success Stories of Weavers, Jaipur Rugs Company, Jaipur

■ I can be Like You!



Name: Rekha Rathore

Occupation: Master Trainer for carpet weaving

Rekha is aged 19 years and hails from a very poor family residing in Pailiya (Churu). She belongs to the Rajput community, a community in which girls are forbidden access to education, health or travelling. She is survived by her father, mother, two brothers and a younger sister. While her father has migrated to Jaipur in search of a better pay, Rekha being the eldest of the children was allowed to complete her schooling till eighth standard. Her village-Pailiya in Churu does not have secondary, senior secondary schools or health facilities available. For classes after eighth standard, students in this village need to travel to the main district Ratangarh which is around 10-15 kms away from this village. The transportation facilities are also very minimal. If anyone needs to travel from Pailiya to Ratangarh, they need to catch up with city buses that have very odd timings of arrival and departure. It has been witnessed that a majority of drunk labours travel in such buses from nearby villages that makes it uncomfortable for any female candidate to travel.

This was a sad reason because of which Rekha couldn't convince her parents to send her to senior secondary school so that she could at least finish her schooling. The result was obvious. She was forced to leave the dream of being a literate lady. "Yaha par ladkiyo ko padaya nahi jaata hai. Kash mere bas mein hota toh mein aap jaisi banjati" (Here females are not allowed to pursue

education. I wish if I had the powers to become like you!), Rekha said when one of our team members visited her home.

Her father is currently working as an inventory care taker for a plywood firm in Jaipur. Earlier, he was working in a garment store in Surat where he earned just about Rs. 5000 pm and was the only earning member in the family. Staying away from home and working in an unhealthy environment, he gradually developed infection in his lungs because of which he was bed ridden for at least three years. Some small savings in her father's account could provide their groceries. Rekha was just 15 then and looking at their financial conditions, she started to seek work. Sewing and stitching caught her attention. Her aunt came forward to help her find clients from nearby villages. She started sewing for her aunt's friends and known relatives. Travelling alone to receive orders and deliver, however, was very difficult. At first, her parents and siblings didn't agree to send her elsewhere. For some days she lied to her parents that she is visiting her neighborhood friends and would smartly vanish with no traces behind to her client's places in search of better orders. "Jab meine pehli baar us mahine Rs. 200 kamaye, muje andaar se khushi bhi hui aur dar laga. Khushi isiliye hui ki main ab kamao ho gayi aur dar isiliye kyuki meine jhoot bola tha," said Rekha. (For the first month when I earned Rs. 200 I was very overwhelmed and at the same time, a fear crept my mind. I was happy because I could sense an independency and afraid because I had lied to my parents!)

Gradually, she started earning about Rs. 1000 per month. The earnings that she had were not enough to meet their father's medical expenses and feed all members of the family. "Un dino mujhe bahut dukh hota tha, ki main ghar mein sabse badi sadasya hone ke bawajood bhi kuch nahi kar pa rahi thi. Sirf Rs. 1000 se kuch nahi hota tha!" said Rekha while speaking to our team members. (Those days I used to feel so depressed looking at my family's conditions. Though being the eldest, I couldn't do much. What difference can Rs. 1000 make to nourish a living?)

Her life has been a path of ups and downs from a very tender age. Once on her way to a client in the nearby village, she heard of a team who was pursuing people to carry forward the art of carpet weaving. She enquired her friends and relatives about the team and the very next day, she started with her hunt. Her search ended at a temple located in her village where the team was interacting with women weavers. On introducing herself, she found that the team members were from Jaipur Rugs Foundation and their purpose of visit was to analyze the livelihoods of people in her village. They also encouraged and motivated people towards stabilized sources of income. One of which was carpet weaving. Her

spirit felt the need of understanding the term and she related weaving with stitching while interacting with the team members.

“Kaleen bhunai ka jab meine suna toh laga ki kuch alag baat to hai. Idhar udhar dhakhe khane se toh acha hai ki ghar bait kar hi kaam kiya jaye,” Rekha told to one of us. (Having heard of carpet weaving, I thought this art is very different. Rather than wandering places, I thought why not work while sitting at home?).

After knowing about carpet weaving training, its benefits and consequences, Rekha discussed the opportunity with her parents. At first there was a resistance from her mother as she wasn't sure of the concept of carpet weaving. Rekha sarcastically smiled and rolled out what her mother had told her while resisting her from participating in the carpet weaving training, “Kahe ko bawli banti hai. Kyu aur kaam leti hai aur patanahi kese log hai. Joh tumhare pankh nikal rahe hai woh kabhi kat jayenge!” (Why do you want to be stupid. Why do you want to take more work and we do not how these people are? The wings on which you want to fly will get damaged someday).

The foundation's team members, Rekha and her friends managed to somehow convince her parents. They were convinced on the fact that Rekha does not have to travel to other places to earn a substantial living and that other female weavers will also be working with her. The training that was conducted by the foundation, focused on different types of knots, carpet designing, reading maps etc. The program also focused on health, gender and sensitivity issues. “Aap ki team bahut acha sikhati hai. Muje khushi hui yeh jaan ke ki Kaleen bhunai ki vajah se hum kafi haad tak acha paisa kama lete hai. Aur doosri mude par bhi baat cheet karne se yeh mehsoos hua ki aage aur kya ho sakta hai,” Rekha said. (Your team was supportive and teaches well. I am pleased to learn that through carpet weaving we can earn a good amount in our family. Having interacted on various issues I felt that there is a lot to be explored in future!)

Rekha, having finished with her carpet weaving training, started as a weaver. A loom was installed by the foundation at her neighbour's house where she started with her career. With experience, her speed of weaving carpets increased. Impressed by her performance and production levels in a span of 12 months, seniors at the field recommended her to the next level. She became a master trainer at the age of 18 and trained at least 16 other young female weavers in her village.

Thinking about her constant struggle in convincing her conservative parents, she today feels proud of her fight. Having worked for three years in carpet

weaving, she said, “Aaj mein kafi ladkiyo ko sikha deti hu. Acha lagta hai. Meri maa bhi khush hoti hai aur baapu kehte hai ki mein teacher ni hu! Unko acha lagta hai jaati biraadri mein mere bare mein baat karna! Aaj lagta hai ki mein badi ho gayi hu. Mujhe pata hai ki aage mein kaha tak jaana chaungi” (Today I am teaching many female weavers. I feel good about it. My mother is extremely overwhelmed and my father says that I am a good teacher. They feel proud about my achievements and speak a lot about me in community meetings. Today, I feel that I have grown up. I have a sense of future and know where it is heading towards)

Today, she earns Rs. 3500 – Rs. 4000 per month and is very much committed towards her work. Her brother is pursuing a computer course for a better job. Her father’s condition is better and is working efficiently in Jaipur. It is because of her earnings that her two young brothers are receiving education.



Rekha (Master Trainer) working with the trainees.

“Acha toh lagta hai ki main khud kama leti hu aur apne pairo par khadi hu. Lekin mein sari pagaar maa ko de deti hoon. Ab woh Bhaiya ko pese dedi hai computer course ke liye. Kabhi muje lagta hai ki maa jitna bhaiya ke bare mein sochti hai, kya meri shikhsha ke bare mein bhi sochti hai kya?” (I feel good about my earnings and I am able to stand on my own. I give my salary to my mother who then gives fees to my brothers for their education. Sometimes I wonder if my mother thought of my education as much as she think of my brother), Rekha said.

As she reads out the design map in her boli and instructing other women weavers, she looks very much immersed yet very ambitious to conquer anything that comes in her way. She is engaged to a college fresher in Sikar and will be soon getting married to him. When asked what would have been another alternative for her if it wasn’t for carpet weaving, she smiled and replied: “Main aap jaisi bana chahti thi” (I wanted to be like you!)

■ The Question of Gender Equality!



Name: Sanju Kanwar

Occupation: Carpet weaver

I used to read in books – how Cinderella was trapped in her house with her step sisters and mother. I used to wonder if she never felt the desire of being free. Though this is a fairy tale, yet the story implies to real life situations. Girls of my community are like the character – Cinderella, trapped in their own house, trapped because of their ideal images imposed by the societies.

I hail from a Rajput community – a very conservative section where women and females especially are not allowed to speak for their rights. The men of this community are the only decision makers, so what if a male is your younger brother or youngest son! If there is a male in the house, he is the sole decision – maker of everything.

I am 18 years old, an adult as per the constitution, yet not independent to take decisions on my own. I pursued my studies till eight standard in a nearby school. I had big dreams and fantasies to finish my schooling and to pursue higher studies. I was 14 then and my favourite subjects were Social Studies, Science, English and Maths. When I topped my eight standard results, my mother was extremely pleased. She was so overwhelmed that she distributed sweets at every corner of our village (Abrasar, a village in Churu). She said, “Aaaj tune meri bhi tamana puri kardi!” (you fulfilled my desire too!).

That very day, my father returned from his work late in the evening. I could still sense my mother’s excitement. She cooked puris, kheer and bhujiyas on the occasion. When my father asked her what was so special about the day, she excitedly exclaimed, “Bitto ne top kiya hai class mein! Isne apne ghar ka naam

bahut roshan kiya hai!” My father was happy on hearing this news. He called me and said that he was a proud father. We had our dinner following which I started to get ready for the very next day. I was packing my bags when I could hear loud noises. I came out of my room to check if there was a fight in the neighborhood but the noises were coming from my parent’s room. I went near to the door and could hear their voices clearly. My father said, “Toh kya hua ki usne top karliya. Hai toh Ladki jaat. Mein kaha tak padaunga usko. Gav mein toh barvi ke liye school bhi nahi. Phir itni pad-likh kar kya karna hai. Shaadi hokar toh ghar hi sambhaal na hai” (So what if she has topped her class. She is a girl. Till what level I need to invest her studies? We don’t have proper schools in our village too. And what will she do after studying. After marriage, she will be required to do the household work.)

I could sense my mother’s tears. She stood for me before him. She wanted to fulfill my desire of studying more. But with hers I could see my dreams sulking too. I could then hear some foot steps coming towards the door. I ran towards my room, thinking of what to do next. I pretended as though I was busy reading a book. My father had come out of his room, looking for me. When he saw me with all the books around, he came in. He smiled and said, “Ab padai bahut hogayi....ghar ke kaam-kaaz bhi seekh le!” (Enough of studies now..learn how to take care of household and groceries). I just looked into his eyes with tears and I could sense he felt the same. He then said, “Main agar tuje padaunga toh parivaar bhukha mar jayega.. aur agar tu ladka hoti toh yeh sab mein nahi sochta..” (If I invest in your studies, our family will be living in hunger. If you were a boy, things would have been different!)

I kept quiet and just nodded my head. There was nothing in my defense to say. The whole night I was awake. Thoughts preoccupied my mind and I kept asking myself why is there so much of differentiation between a male and a female?. Though in this nation, we worship goddesses and consider females to be a re-born version of the goddesses, yet we are considered worthless to be invested upon! I knew it was a tough job convincing my father. My mother had tried her best but the very next day, she was all fine with not letting me go to pursue education further. For many days, I tried convincing my mother. Many a times it so happened that on seeing other children going to school, my heart sulked deep inside. Even my teacher visited our home and talked to my parents, but there was no turning back from the decision once taken.

My father is a farmer and occasionally gets a lump sum at home. Survived by three sisters and a younger brother, our family income those days, were very less to feed us all and take care of our basic amenities. I had left schooling but the fire of reading and knowing more couldn’t fade off.

One day on my way to a friend’s house, I saw a group of people talking to women in our neighbourhood. The group seemed well-organized and educated.

On joining the discussion, I realized that they were from a foundation who wanted to empower women through carpet weaving. They were collecting names of women who would like to earn a better living. Without giving any second thoughts, I added my name to the list. On returning home, my mother asked me whole sorts of questions on such people and whether I knew them or if I had met them. My younger cousin had told her that I was participating in a meeting like this. So the outburst, was natural!

In the evening, ladies from our neighbourhood were talking about carpet weaving to my mother as well. She thought of joining the group as well since she felt that this would raise our family income. She asked me if I had registered, to which I said yes. The very next day, I and my mother searched for such group and on meeting them they managed to convince us about carpet weaving. The search ended here, however the fear crept in both of us. We were scared of facing my father. Late at night, after dinner my mother and I took the courage of asking him to allow us joining carpet weaving training. He first replied, "Mein mard hu...humare ghar ki aurto ko koi hak nahi banta kamaane ka jab tak mein zinda hu!" (I am a man...my family's women or ladies do not have the rights to earn a living until I am alive!).

I could feel my sweat pouring at the base of my spine. My mother explained him the training process, about those people and the need of doing so. For a week, I and my mother constantly pricked him with new ideas and thinking with a broad mindset. One fine day, we insisted him to meet one of the trainers from foundation. After a detailed lecture on what we will be trained on and how is carpet weaving useful, the trainer somehow managed to get my father in a convincing mode.

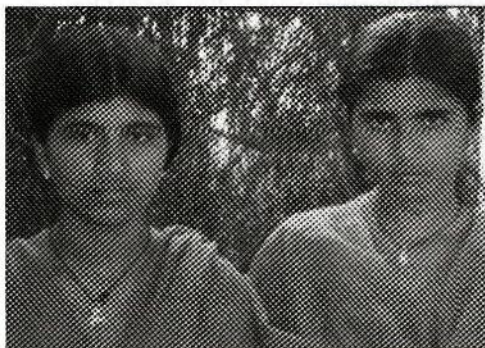
A few more girls from my village had a similar problem. Yet the foundation members (Jaipur Rugs Foundation), could easily convince the lot as it didn't involve the risk of earning outside homes and villages. The members told us that we will be provided with looms at our homes and a master trainer to train us on carpet weaving. My mother had known this art since her childhood but after having married to my father, she had left carpet weaving.

Very soon, we started with our carpet weaving training with the foundation. There were experts from different places like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal etc. to teach us the skills. My mother could pursue much of the training as it was getting hectic for her to manage everything at home but I still continued learning. In a period of six months, I finished the training and then a loom was installed at my house where we started weaving our first carpet. Friends and girls aged 16-17 years came down at my house to weave. The group was made by the foundation and we followed the instructions religiously. Finally, our first carpet was made and it was now the time for our salaries.

The day I received my first salary, I felt proud of it. I could sense power defining me, my ambitions and my confidence increased. When I showed this to my father, he felt overwhelmed! I gave half of the amount to him and half to my mother for household groceries. They looked at me with pride and couldn't stop adoring me!

Today, it has been a year and a half since I have been working as a carpet weaver. And this has changed my life drastically. Until now I always overheard people saying how money enhances one's persona of living. And it is indeed true. I started with Rs. 2000 per month and now I earn Rs. 4000 per month. I give half of my earnings to my parents and the rest I save in a bank! Still I wish if I could get an opportunity to study further. Had I had the chance of going to a college, I would have earned even better.

■ Life is a Matter of Holding on...



Name: Puja and Manju Singh

Occupation: Carpet Weavers

Puja and Manju, unlike other girls of their age have seen it all in their lives. Aged 16 and 17 years respectively, these girls are sharing the responsibility of their family. Survived by parents and three siblings, these young ladies are striving hard in the battle to earn sustainable living.

Located in Ambarsar village in Churu, their father Gulab Singh, aged 45 years earns a living by selling wheat from nearby farms. He earns Rs. 50 per day, an amount insufficient to meet the daily needs of the family. The expenses of the family coughed up when the doctors declared that Puja's mother is suffering from Tuberculosis.

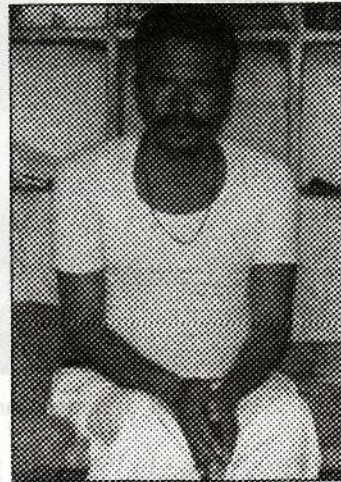
On being visited by JRF's team, Gulab Singh said, "Family planning bahut zaroori hai. Itne logo ka palan poshan, mere jaisa gareeb nahi kar sakta!" (Family planning is very vital. To feed so many family members is impossible for a beggar like me!)

Manju, the eldest daughter pursued her education till fifth standard in a nearby school in the village. When asked on whether it was her decision to do

so, she softly replied, “Amma ki tabiyat bahut biggade jaa rahi thi. Main agar school jaati thi toh ghar par koi nahi sambhal pata tha. Isiliye padai chod di!” (My mother was falling severely ill every day. If I went to school, there was no one to take good care of her. That’s why I had to leave my education!)

Having said these words she shyed away from talking further. Then we asked Puja if she would like to continue with her studies, to which she replied, “Pad loongi par didi ki madad kaun karega?” (I can study but who will help my sister!)

Gulab Singh in the month of August had met with a frightful accident. On falling from a five storey building while helping construction workers, he fractured both his ankles. His medical expenses shot up to more than a lakh. “Mujhe toh ab upar wala hi bacha sakta hai. Mein kahan jaun. Jeene ka koi matlab nahi hai” (Only God can save me from these hurdles. Where do I go? It is no use to be alive!) said Gulab Singh.



Gulab Singh thinking hard to survive in future

Two years ago, Gulab Singh had heard of Jaipur Rugs Foundation implementing looms in village households. Somehow, he attended the social meetings organized by the foundation and got convinced on having a loom installed at his home. He had attended the weaving skill training and along with the neighbourhood, he started to weave carpet on a part-time basis to earn a better living. Subsequently after a year, Puja and Manju learnt carpet weaving skills and they started earning while sitting at homes.

“Muje acha lag raha hai jab mein paise kama rahi hu. Kam se ka amma ki davaiyo ka kharcha toh nikal jata hai!” said Manju when asked on her experience in carpet weaving (I like the fact that I am earning money now. At least medical expenses of my mother can be met through such earnings!). At present she alone earns Rs. 4000 per month to take care of her family needs. Her parents are ill and she along with Puja takes the charge of the family. “Main bhi kaleen ki bhunai karke didi ki madad kar deti hu! Acha bahut lagta hai jab do hazaar rupaiy haath mein aate hai. Ise main kharch nahi karti hu!” said Puja on being asked if she helps her sister in carpet weaving. (I help my elder sister in weaving a carpet. It feels good when I get paid Rs. 2000 for the art. I do not spend this amount anywhere!).

While taking a leave from Gulab Singh's house after meeting the girls and the family, Gulab Singh replied, "Yeh toh loom hai madamji jiski vajah se mein aur mera parivaar zinda hai. Nahi toh main kab ka khatam ho jaata!" (It is only because of this loom madam that I and my family could survive otherwise I was finished!)

* * *



Gita with her daughter Manju.

Name: Gita

Occupation: Carpet Weaver

Age: 35 years

Work Experience: One year

Family Status: Poor

Village: Ambrasar (Churu)

Community: OBC

Survived by five children and a husband, Gita started carpet weaving a year ago. She works on a part-time basis since their main source of earnings is cattle raising and farming. She was hardly educated and got married at a very early age. Since then

she engaged herself in cattle raising while her husband sold the produce from their farm. Having given birth to three daughters and two sons, Gita decided to let her eldest daughter study in the village school. For her academics fee, they sold their land in fragments and Gita adopted carpet weaving on a part time basis. "Mujhe apni beti ki fikar hai ki kahin wo meri tera na rehjaye! Usse pad likh kar bada aadmi ban na hai" (I am worried about my daughter. I hope she doesn't stay like me. She needs to study well and become a better person).

Manju, Gita's eldest daughter is 15 years old and assists her mother in carpet weaving whenever she comes back from school. On a part time basis Gita earns at a max of Rs. 1200 per month while her husband is able to collect Rs. 30 per day.

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