

[Influencers of Jaipur] Mr. Yogesh Chaudhary – Jaipur Rugs



Tell us the story behind the establishment of Jaipur Rugs Company?

Jaipur Rugs was founded by Mr. Nand Kishore Chaudhary in the year 1978. He made a very humble beginning, reaching out to Indian artisans living in Rural India to provide them livelihood, skills, and training. NKC grew up in a small town called Churu. This is where he was born, went to school and college and started to work for his father briefly- in his shoe shop "Bharat boot house". In all these years, he often rebelled the conventional laws of the society and businesses.

In 1978, he gave up a bank job and borrowed Rs. 5000 from his father to start his carpet business. The journey began with 2 looms, 9 weavers and one scooter in Rajasthan. Over 3 years, NKC's production expanded to 10 looms and a larger pool of artisans. In 1986, he took the first step towards his dream of connecting artisans to global markets. He initiated direct exports cutting out another level of middlemen. In 1989, he moved to Gujarat's tribal belts to start building the company's strongest network to date. Gujarat's tribal artisans joined the Jaipur network in the same year. In 1999, he came back to Jaipur and formally started Jaipur Rugs (then known as Jaipur Carpets).

The ultimate objective of Jaipur Rugs is to bring dignity back in the age old craft of Hand-knotting rugs and this has been the insurgent mission of the organization since 38 years.

"Service to the community" is your company's motto; in addition to this, the company has 40,000 weavers in 6 states of India. How hard is it to bind them to a single thread?

The insurgent mission of Jaipur Rugs is to emotionally connect two ends, the stories & craftsmanship of the weavers with the dreams and emotions of the end consumers. The strength of Jaipur Rugs lies in creating happy human network of 40000 artisans who are working through a seamless value chain. We recognise our weavers as artisans while bringing dignity to their profession. Before the company began to transform the value chain, carpet weavers often felt alienated from the product and their art, and felt little pride in their work. They worked as labourers on different parts of carpets without knowing about the beautiful products they were producing. Some of them had never seen a finished carpet even though they had worked in the industry for 30 years.

To change this, Jaipur Rugs Foundation created the Weaver's Engagement Programme, which introduced artisans to the entire process of carpet production and widened their perspective on the industry. Several women weavers were trained through this programme over the years.



A major focus of the Young Women Social Development Programme was on building confidence in order to help the women to take on leadership roles within their villages and subvert traditional gender imbalances within rural society. The fact that 108 women were trained through this programme is an exceptional indicator of its success. In a bid to bind these 40000 weavers with a single thread, each village has been connected through a nodal branch office. Around 70 represents from grassroot level communicate daily with NKC to strengthen the bond of 40,000 artisans living in six states.

We have a strong human thread which has empowered numerable communities, breaking traditions and engaging more than 40,000 people across India.

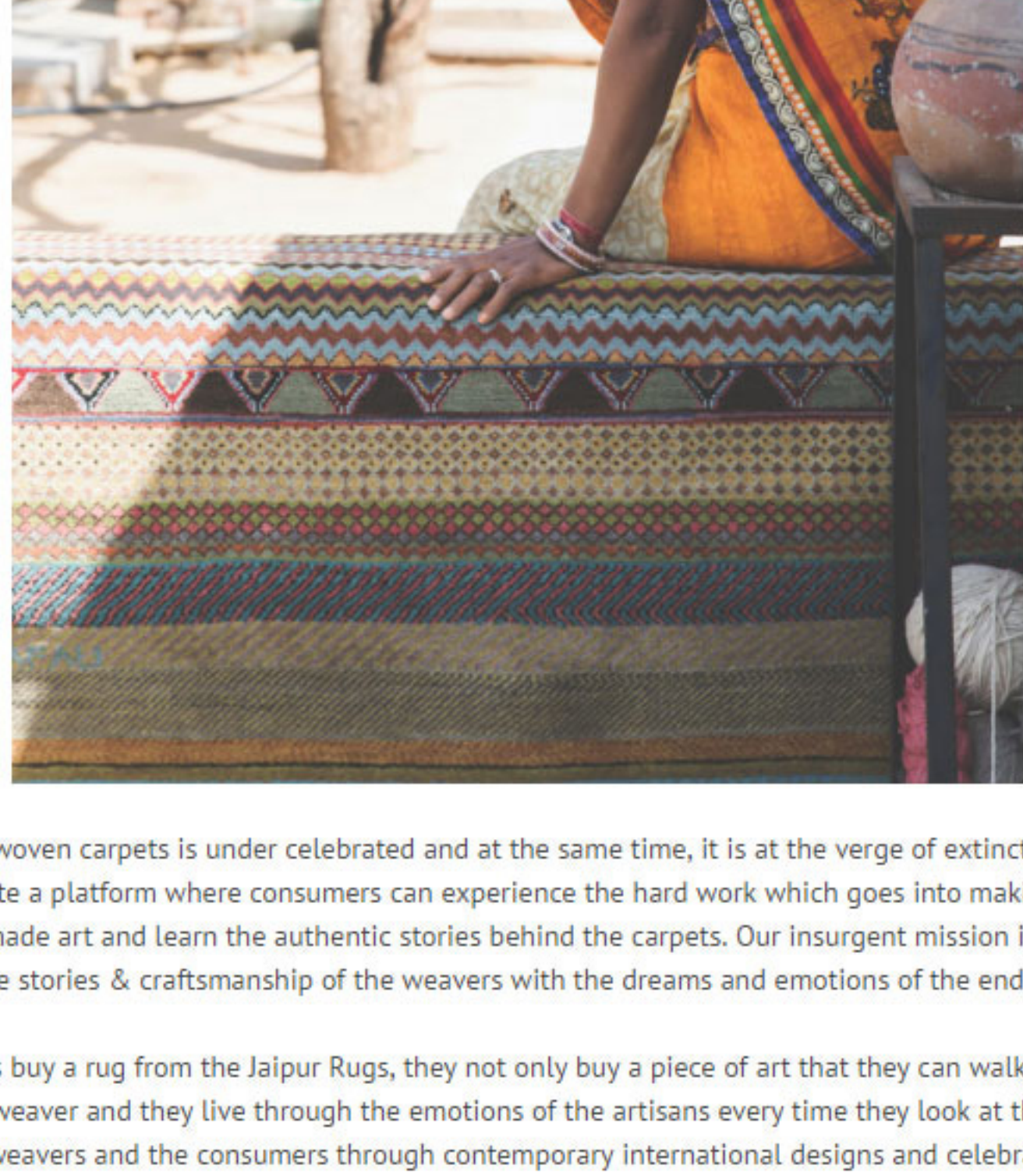
Child labor is a common issue with Carpet Industry in India. How do we eradicate this issue?

In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age. Whether or not particular forms of "work" can be called "child labour" depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries.

When children learn a craft from their parents, in their free-time, after school, it is mindful and conscious learning. JRC does not include them as wage earners in the supply chain. . The carpet industry in the last 15-20 years has significantly evolved and if it was just backed on the basis of child labor, it would have collapsed many years ago. Because of the active steps of the government and the substantial increase in the wages in the carpet industry and the villagers also wanting to follow the 'Indian growth dream', nobody wants their children to be sent out for weaving. Rather they want to send them to schools since schooling is now available by the Government in all parts of the country. Also, as Jaipur Rugs freed weavers from the clutches of the contractual system, they started getting more money in hands which they are spending in making better future for their children.

Many handcrafted carpet techniques are on the verge of extinction. What do you have to say about this?

The end game of Jaipur Rugs is to preserve and revive the traditional practice of hand weaving the rugs. It has been observed that in countries where traditionally hand knotted rugs were manufactured, this art is steeply declining. This includes countries like Turkey, Nepal, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran and India, and therefore, our end game is to work against this shrinkage and preserve the art.



The art of hand woven carpets is under celebrated and at the same time, it is at the verge of extinction. Keeping this in mind, we create a platform where consumers can experience the hard work which goes into making precious pieces of hand-made art and learn the authentic stories behind the carpets. Our insurgent mission is to emotionally connect ends, the stories & craftsmanship of the weavers with the dreams and emotions of the end consumers.

When consumers buy a rug from the Jaipur Rugs, they not only buy a piece of art that they can walk on, but they also buy a story of a weaver and they live through the emotions of the artisans every time they look at the Rug. We bind the lives of the weavers and the consumers through contemporary international designs and celebrate the revival of the dying art.

What is your take on displaying at Trade Fairs? Do they play any significant role in opening new markets or reaching out to new buyers?

We have been an active participant in trade fairs. Basically, we always look forward for ways to make our buyers at trade shows think more about the weavers beyond the usual conversations of product, price, quality and delivery.

Since we recognize that a happy human network is at the core of our business, we want our customers to know about it and get connected to the community of rug makers, and know the end-to-end link. We came up with the idea of personalised postcards. For both weavers/spinners and customers to use ink to draw or write something with their own hands felt very personal and human. We were not interested in the beauty of the drawing but an innocent human expression reaching from one person in the weaving village to one customer in another part of the world and vice-versa. As the trade fairs communicated our expression across customers, they did help us in opening new markets and reach out to new buyers.

In 2016, Jaipur Rugs had been honored at the 27th Annual Arts Award for winning in the 'Green Manufacturer' Category. How do you feel about it?

The recognition celebrates Jaipur's commitment to fostering socio-economic interventions that have improved living situations of artisan communities across the country.

What started with two looms in a rural village in India has become a platform for more than 40,000 artisans to raise their standard of living through better income, access to healthcare and education.



We feel humbled as well as honored to win this very prestigious Arts Award for doing work that we truly love and believe in.

Tell us something about Jaipur Rugs Foundation (JRF).

The Jaipur Rugs Foundation is a field-based organisation affecting over 40,000 artisans at the grass roots level, building their capacity to earn higher wages, promoting social enterprise at the individual level graduates artisans from being mere wage earners to owning their own business. Since most artisans involved are women, increased income will mean meaningful contributions in alleviating poverty. We perceive this concept as the perfect vehicle for rural development and an important role in social responsibility. Facilitating income-generating opportunities at the doorsteps of artisans residing in the remotest of locations, helps improve the life standards of the artisans and their families.

According to the latest news, handmade carpets in India are set to receive a government trademark and set standards. What is your verdict on the same?

Standardisation and government trademarks are always good for any decentralized and fragmented sector. Product standardization addresses the norms/standards to be followed in stage of manufacturing. Similarly, ratings come as a benchmarking tool adopted for a specific industry encompassing many aspects from various concepts of standardization.

Govt of India has proposed to promote standardization and enhance compliance to social and environmental requirements to strengthen the industry to meet the challenges.

These standards promote good manufacturing practices/management practices in handmade carpet industry, ensure compliance to social requirements, inculcate quality culture in industry and enhance the image of Indian carpet industry in domestic and overseas market.



Where do you see Jaipur Rugs Company 10 years down the line? The global carpet market is expected to reach an estimated USD 39.1 billion by 2021. Where do we see ourselves?

In ten years down the line, we intend to create a ripple effect by generating demand through positive word of mouth through our consumers and millennials who we engage through various activities.

We aim at effectively engaging our consumers & developing deeper understanding of best practices that actually work.

We aim at conveying to the millennials that buying the handmade rugs is not merely buying a luxurious commodity but it is about becoming the proud owner of a handcraft, being fully aware about the transforming lives behind their purchases.

Our target consumers are and will be young married couples with children, who have done well for themselves and look at settling down in style. In coming years, we will be curating spaces in the form of an art gallery rather than a regular commercial space.

This was the second article in the series – Influencers of Jaipur, If you feel that you know any influencer worth knowing or featuring on JaipurCityBlog.com – Email us on info@jaipurcityblog.com