It is the story of
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.

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.
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.

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 products 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.

JAIPUR RUGS

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.

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 woolen 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.
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.

DESIGNS BY KAVI

While the rugs woven, be it pure silk, bamboo silk, woolen 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 sens. 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.
EMBOSSED 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 Gubanrai 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.