

# Jaipur Rugs Foundation Weaving dreams

Preserving the age-old craft of hand-woven carpets, Jaipur Rugs Foundation is working tirelessly to generate a dignified and sustainable livelihood for artisans.



**A**bout four hours from the city of Jaipur, in a village called Kekri – Parvati Devi and her husband Bhagchand sat together on an unassuming loom to weave a carpet purely out of their imagination. On completion, they named it *Sawan Ka Lehariya*. This rug is a beautiful story of the chemistry between the couple who started off by weaving two very different designs. While Parvati designed the traditional *lehariya* pattern on the rug, Bhagchand was making diamond like motifs in a very systematic manner. Initially, Bhagchand insisted Parvati imitate his design, but Parvati refused to follow him and continued making the *lehariya*

pattern. As the rug progressed, the couple's neighbours saw the design and preferred what Parvati was making. Following that, Bhagchand took cues from Parvati's design and both of them weaved the *lehariya* pattern.

In July this year, Parvati and Bhagchand defeated global design houses to win the prestigious European Product Design Award, 2019 for their rug *Sawan Ka Lehariya*. This was made possible through a unique social initiative called the Artisan Originals or *Manchaha* started by The Jaipur Rugs Foundation (JRF).

#### **STARTING A DREAM**

JRF was established in 2004 to create a society where equality,

justice, and peace prevail through socio-economic development to provide opportunities for all, with the insurgent mission to serve as a social innovator promoting the cause of artisans (especially women) by providing them job opportunities in rural society. With the help of its sustainability programs, the foundation has turned craft into a tool for change and is working hard to achieve several UN development goals such as: no poverty, gender equality, decent work, economic growth and responsible consumption and production.

Through its social programs, JRF has impacted 1,29,200 lives and provided livelihood to artisans in 600 villages, spread across five states. It has created 40,000 jobs directly and indirectly and empowered 41,605 rural women. Under its healthcare program, it has covered 28,287 people by providing access to healthcare.

#### **OVERCOMING THE CRISIS**

India has millions of craftsmen who are engaged in traditional crafts that symbolise the cultural identity of the Indian civilisation. But these art forms are threatened by mechanised mass production, which is killing human creativity.

To sustain this creative potential, JRF trains and nurtures artisans in remote villages across India and provides sustainable livelihood to them. It is constantly working towards eliminating the middlemen and ensuring fair wages for artisans and has managed to touch the lives of 40,000 artisans, of which 80 per cent are women. For the first time in their lives, these women are now financially



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empowered and improving the lives of their family.

JRF is working towards making the handmade carpet industry a sustainable one. It also provides functional skills to artisans and village community members, and brings transformation by providing an understanding of health, hygiene, family life, education, and the environment.

### **CREATIVE SOCIAL INNOVATION**

JRF has introduced the Artisan Originals (AO) or *Manchaha* initiative to tap into the available fashion from the villages of India. For the first time ever, weavers get to design their own rugs. Each rug in the collection is a masterpiece imbued with the individuality of its artisan as evident in its unique artistry. It experiments with the originality of rural crafts people to nurture their creative potential, which is unexplored at the global stage.

This collection has won numerous awards including the German Design Award, Elle Décor Award, Carpet Design Award (runners up), IF Design Award and the European Product Design Award.

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## Other INITIATIVES

### **EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

To address illiteracy among marginalised women at the grassroot, this programme aims to provide basic functional literacy to illiterate artisans in rural villages, thereby making them self-sufficient.

### **HEALTH CAMPS**

Jaipur Rugs Foundation organises regular health camps and eye check-up programs for artisans and their communities and these camps are open to everyone in the area.

### **GOVERNMENT LINKAGES**

JRF facilitates access to social welfare schemes run by the government such as artisan cards, financial inclusion schemes and Udyog Aadhar cards among others. It is also involved in increasing awareness about artisan rights and entitlements.



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original designs competing with professional designers and mega design houses on the global stage. This one of its kind social innovation has resulted in important transformations in the life of the weavers. It has renewed their passion for weaving, given them self-confidence and recognition in their own communities. The project has facilitated the economic transformation of weavers who used to work as mere wage earners.

**REACHING BEHIND THE BARS**  
JRF has started another initiative to teach carpet weaving to jail

inmates who are serving long sentences. The aim is to create sustainable livelihood for them so that they can support their families through it.

The foundation is also helping in opening bank accounts for these prisoners so that they can receive the payment for their work directly in their accounts for the work they do. Skilled knowledge not only instills mindfulness in the

inmates but also provides means of sustained livelihood.

JRF works in five Indian states namely Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. It is supported by a core team of development professionals and field staff. In addition, interns and volunteers from premier academic institutions are constantly involved in spearheading special projects taken up by the foundation. ✨



### VISTARA QUIZ

Question 3: What is Simba's mother's name in *The Lion King*?

Answers in the next issue of Vistara magazine.

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