

The Good Sight

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Rural artisans weave magic, receive European Product Design Award

Through the Artisan Originals initiative rural men and women who have either had no education or just primary education, have stunned the world with original designs competing with professional designers and mega design houses on the global stage

▼ The hand woven rug having lehariya pattern



Weaver couple, Parvati and Bagchand from Kekri village in Rajasthan defeated global design houses to win the prestigious European Product Design Award, 2019 for their rug Sawan ka Lehariya - woven and conceptualised by them together. The rug is a part of the Artisan Originals collection under which weavers become the designers of their own rug. This collection experiments with the originality of rural craftsmen and nurtures their creative potential, which is unexplored at the global stage.

This rug is a beautiful story of the chemistry between the couple who started off by weaving two very different designs on the rug. While Parvati designed lehariya patterns on the rug, Bagchand was making diamond like motifs in a very systematic manner.

Initially, Bhagchand insisted Parvati to imitate his design, but Parvati refused to follow him and kept designing her own thing. As the rug progressed, the couple's neighbors saw the design and preferred Parvati's design more. Following that Bhagchand took cues from Parvati's design and both of them started weaving the lehariya pattern. "All the credit for this rug goes to my wife. If it wasn't for her, this rug wouldn't have looked so beautiful", says Bhagchand with a smile.

The European Product Design Award™ was created to recognise the efforts of talented international product designers who aim to improve our daily lives with their practical, well-thought-out creations. It rewards the strategic thinking and imagination

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- Bhagchand

which goes into making a great product. Farmani Group assembled European Product Design Award to bring attention to international product design and promote the winning designers to the prominent audience in Europe.

Jaipur Rugs is a social business that connects rural craftsmanship with global markets through its luxurious handmade carpets. It offers an exclusive range of hand knotted and hand-woven rugs made using a traditional art form. The carpets are contemporary, transitional and eclectic in design and are currently exported to over 60 countries and 135 cities. The company has a retail presence in India, US, China and Russia.

The social enterprise has a strong grassroots connect and works with close to 40,000 artisans in 600 villages in India, providing families with sustainable livelihood at their door steps. Each rug passes through 180 hands, perfecting the timeless art of carpet weaving. Every rug brings to the cities the stories of its weaver and binds together the lives of rural artisans with urban consumers. The goal of Jaipur Rugs is to keep alive the art of carpet weaving and use business as an agent of change and progression.

Through its bottom-up business model the organisation has impacted 1,29,200 lives and created 40,000 jobs directly and indirectly in some of the most impoverished regions of India.

This initiative has been introduced by Jaipur Rugs which taps into the untamed fashion from the villages of India. It experiments with the originality of rural craftsmen to nurture their creative potential, which is unexplored at a global stage. For the first time ever, weavers get to be the designers of their own rugs. Each rug in the collection is a masterpiece for the design inspiration it weaves. It is imbued with the individuality of its artisan evident in unique artistry. This collection has won numerous awards including the German Design Award, Elle Décor Award, Carpet Design Award (runners up) and the European Product Design Award.

Through the Artisan Originals initiative rural men and women who have either had no education or just primary education, have stunned the world with 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 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. ■

(All inputs by JRF)