

The Alternative View: Being ethical by sourcing local in India – May 27th 2010

Two dynamic and successful businesswomen, Jyoti Hindocha and Kajal Nisha Patel, had the audience enthralled as they shared their personal but very different journeys of starting a business with an ethical heart. While Jyoti spoke about the challenges and joys of her business, Indikal, a specialist store in quality handicrafts and clothes, Kajal spoke about her passion for the environment and how that has led her to begin her journey of starting Sattvic Spice, selling traditional Indian cookware. For both women, sourcing locally and ethically in India is important to them.

Ethical sourcing has become increasingly popular in the UK over the last few years. But why is local ethical sourcing important? For both Kajal and Jyoti, the reasons are different, but as part of AFP's Sudarshan project, they were able to share their individual stories.

Jyoti's journey began with her appreciation of art which was nurtured at a young age. When Indikal was set up in 1997, this passion became a career. The name Indikal was born, representing quality, something "distinctively different". Jyoti wanted to ensure that she could source individually and develop a connection with the artisans who were supplying her. This connection allowed her to see how sourcing in this way could help families and communities. For example, she is able to contribute to the retention of traditional Indian crafts through working with craftspeople whose skills have been passed down from generation to generation. "These artists work from their heart. They can spend anything from 6 to 18 months on one piece of work, that is pure dedication" says Jyoti.



Jyoti Hindocha

Indikal has had a positive impact on individuals and local communities through its ethical sourcing.. For one elderly craftsman who was unable to hand his craft down to his children, Indikal bought his family a cow. This enabled the family to earn a living through selling of milk. The elderly craftsman has since died and his family are reliant on the cow as their only means of income. Supporting local families has been as important as running a business for Jyoti.

Kajal's journey began somewhat differently. Kajal had already successfully sold *bartan* (Indian cookware) but wanted to look deeper. So on a normal day in India, just walking down the street, Kajal noticed the street hawkers. As she moved closer, she saw them selling rustic traditional *bartan* that she had never seen in shops. For Kajal, these represented items that would be found in the traditional Indian home and that was what she wanted to sell. Hence, Sattvic Spice in its present form was born.



Kajal Patel

"Sattvic means pure, and I wanted to try and bring this honesty and truth to my business," says Kajal. "With these traditional *bartan* that are all made from natural materials I know they are non-toxic unlike materials like Teflon."

As dynamic as the stories were, for both women there are challenges in ethical sourcing. Firstly, both women find and source the products themselves. This

ensures quality and develops a relationship with the craftspeople but it is very time consuming. Both Jyoti and Kajal travel to India regularly, travelling to rural parts to hunt down the local artisans. This is no glamorous business trip. The checks and balances in terms of quality are all done in-house, meaning that each item is checked at the site of purchase in the villages and before it is sent to the UK. It can be a long process and frustrating at times, both women admit but for them 'it is wholeheartedly worth it' because their businesses represent quality and value, something they want to guarantee this to their consumers too.

At the end of the presentation, audience members commented on how inspiring both women were. "They spoke from the heart and are in their own way making a difference. That is inspiring to hear."

Interested in hearing more about ethical sourcing?

Visit: <http://www.affp.org.uk/sudarshan>

For more information on our speakers visit:

Indikal (Jyotiben): www.indikal.co.uk

Sattvic Spice (Kajal Patel): www.sattvicspice.com