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Anjali Nauriyal | Tehri Garhwal District

Some dreams do come true. And Hope for Women is one such dream that had intrinsic merit and the zeal of a few people behind it that helped it materialise. Evan Goldsmith and Saji Kumar worked in the mountains with a social outfit Sri Bhuvanesh Wari Mahila Ashram (SBMA). Here they learnt the ropes of community work and empowerment, especially women empowerment, and soon their venture for the economically disadvantaged women, Hope for Women was born.

It was way back in 1992 that Evan first set foot in Garhwal Himalayas, after graduating from Bucknell University in 1992. While other under grads preferred the fashionable Europe, Evan longed to reach the Himalayas in Northern India. While in India he was captivated by the culture, beauty and natural splendor of the mountains and stayed on to work with some of the non-governmental organisations dedicated to empowering women of the mountains. He was moved by the plight of the hill women who barely managed to make two ends meet with meagre family incomes. He was filled with the desire to serve these women

It's all in the cards

Greeting cards made by the women of Tehri Garhwal district have found space in over 200 stores in 42 states around the United States of America

somehow.

Goldsmith's initial stay in India lasted two long years, and he became deeply attached to the plight of these women. That's when he along with Saji Kumar, with whom he shared a room during his initial days in India, mooted the idea of uniting economically disadvantaged women under the umbrella of Hope for Women.

Evan has now partnered with his father David to start a US-based company that sells fair trade greeting cards decorated with brightly coloured dried and pressed flowers - made by the Himalayan women. Evan informs that in the mid 1990s he chanced upon women of Tehri Garhwal District

working on projects that dealt specifically with pressed flowers. That's when he first thought of an enterprise of this



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: Women busy with packing the cards; (left) Saji and Evan (inset)



FUTURE PERFECT

The main aim of the founder members of the organisation is to provide the women artisans of Tehri Garhwal district stability and financial security

US CALLING

Hope for Women has now become an approved vendor for Midwest Region of Whole Food Market, the world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods

nature. And today a small idea is on its way to becoming big business. Saji informs, "Hope for Women has now become an approved vendor for the Midwest Region of Whole Foods Market, the world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods. Our cards can now be found in 19 of the US's Whole Foods Market stores. This is a major step forward for our endeavour."

"I am elated that Hope for Women greeting cards are now available in over 200 stores in 42 states around the United States. Thanks to the quality that we maintain, we have been able to achieve a national sales presence within food stores, stationary stores, booksellers, botanical gardens, yoga

studios, clothing stores, fair trade shops, gardening centers, gift stores, coffee and tea shops and other exceptional retailers." Surrounded by women engrossed in packaging their

consignment, Saji states, "Our prime aim is to provide our women artisans stability. We are trying to increase our

production manifold so that by year 2010 we are able to provide full time employment to as many women as possible." Hope for Women's collection catalog offers 42 unique designs to choose from. Each collection is artisan crafted with real flowers and natural paper. Additional designs are available by season. These are adorned with sophisticated, gracefully meandering designs created from richly colored wildflowers and extraordinary grasses.

WOMEN EMPOWERED