

# The Origin of Rita Rugs

The story of Sudershan Goel,  
Founder and President

Many successful companies can trace their humble beginnings to kitchen tables. Rita Rugs can truthfully say they started their business on a living room floor. When Rita Rugs founder Sudershan Goel (his friends call him Shan) first came to America from his native India, he worked long, hard hours for minimum wage. During this difficult time, Shan's father in India sent him a consignment of handmade Oriental rugs to try to sell.

The year was 1979.

The first shipment of rugs had to be stored in the one-bedroom apartment Shan shared with his wife Rita. When they had a prospective buyer, they would have to take all the furniture out of their living room and put it in the kitchen to display the rug.



*Shan's first consignment of rugs from  
India filled his entire living room.*



Friends and relatives who lived nearby would help move these heavy rugs around. When Shan would sell a rug, his customers would be amazed at how affordable they were.

This made Shan realize he could create a unique business in Chicago: Delivering top quality handmade rugs without the high prices.

Shan recalled how Kashmiris - people from that part of India where the best rugs are made - used to sell their rugs. They would load the rugs on a horse-drawn carriage called a tonga and take them to a friend's home. Not only would they give the host a good price if he decided to buy, but if the host invited friends, and they bought one, the host would receive a percentage of the evening's sales. It was sort of like a tupperware party for handmade rugs.

That first evening, Shan took nine rugs, and sold a few. This new approach proved so successful that Shan held more of these parties, and also took carpets to antique shows and flea markets. He began to advertise in the classifieds. Any way to get the word out about his affordable rugs.

Soon large department stores began selling Shan's rugs. His wholesale business grew. To meet demand, Shan's family connections in India arranged to have rugs manufactured and delivered directly to his business. When a few retailers unexpectedly cancelled orders, Shan realized it was time to get into the retail business himself. Now all he needed was his own store.

*The Kashmiris of India made the best rugs, and had a novel way to help sell them.*



*Shan became an expert in the Oriental Rug business in Chicago, and was often called upon by the media for commentary.*



*Top designers began to visit Rita Rugs to find beautiful rugs for their upscale customers.*



Shan opened it in 1983, in a small storefront on South State Street.

Over the next few years, he added more locations. And Rita Rugs, named after Shan's wife, became the one of the largest Oriental rug retailers in Chicago.

Shan credits his success to his constant focus on customer satisfaction. In order to ensure a customer fancied a rug, he would let them take it into their home for a few days to see how they liked it. If there was any issue, Shan would take the rug back. Customers were so happy with this sales technique and Shan's attention to their needs, that when Yelp began tracking customer ratings in the last decade, Rita Rugs scored an amazing 5 stars.

Shan consolidated his stores into one location in 1990. His store still carries a large rug inventory, offering a wide array of colors, styles, designs and shapes, and of course, low prices.

This year, Rita Rugs will expand their retail operation to offer high quality handmade Oriental rugs online on their website. They are now able to order a far wider array of rugs at a moments notice, from their suppliers around the world, and have them shipped to their store in days or weeks.



*Shan would often hold gala events at his retail outlet to attract customers.*



*Rita Rug's ad campaigns from the 1980's were created by some of Chicago's top ad agencies, and won numerous awards.*



In this age of globalization, Rita Rugs can offer many more unique services for their customers. Would you like a custom-created, handmade Oriental rugs in countries like India, Nepal, Turkey or China? You may want to ask if such a thing can be done in this day and age. Yet Rita Rugs can still deliver them at a very reasonable cost. Since these custom rugs perfectly meet the customers needs and desires, they can indeed be worth the wait.



*Interior designers can now have their custom designs handmade by artisans across the globe and delivered directly to Rita Rugs.*

In the future, customers can expect the same amazing attention to their needs. Plus more innovation, improved selection, and the same 5-star customer satisfaction ratings, as Rita Rugs continues their mission to deliver top quality Oriental rugs to their customers at the lowest possible price.

