



New Hope In Pakistan

Mansoor Ali emigrated to the newlyformed Pakistan in 1947. A college professor with a good job, he found no employment in the new country, even with his credentials. He and his family struggled to have enough to eat. His uncle taught him how to carve and polish onyx. Eventually the family business began to succeed, but Mansoor never forgot the bitter taste of poverty. He offered to train people flocking to the city from the farms to carve stone so they would not have to struggle as hard as his family had. Thus Dominion Traders was born.

Years later, when Mansoor's son, Mansour II, left his house, he met Naim (Nah-EEM) and his family, who had leaned their temporary home against the wall of his house overnight. Naim had been cheated of his farm by an unscrupulous moneylender during a long drought. Now Naim was in Karachi, but there were no jobs for illiterate farmers, and without a job, no money for food or housing for his family. Mansoor remembered what his father had told. He offered to teach Naim the stone-carving business. Naim turned out to have valuable machinery repair skills, and now has his own shop with the help of Dominion Traders. Mansoor II passed away recently, but the fine legacy of fair trade continues at Dominion Traders.

Dominion Traders

Dominion Traders works with underprivileged artisans carving stone and shesham wood crafts in the city of Karachi. It disperses orders to 20 independently owned and operated onyx workshops employing between 100 and 150 people. Scattered throughout Pakistan, the individual workshop owns its own equipment and rents or owns the facility. Most are family businesses employing several family members. The artisans speak different languages and, unusually for Pakistan, practice different religions.

The Reaz Family

The stone-carving workshop of Mr. Reaz and his brothers is located in Manzur colony on the outskirts of Karachi. The stone, mostly onyx, is mined in remote Baluchistan province, near the Afghan border. The stone is trucked to Karachi as large boulders which are then cut up into smaller pieces and delivered to several family workshops around the city. Like many others, the family specializes in only one or two designs, in their case, elephant bookends.

One of the critical needs of the family is water. This part of Karachi has no municipal water service, so all water is delivered by water sellers using donkey carts. Mr Reaz said their work with Dominion Traders has allowed them to have regular water delivery as well as good food, a better house and education for the children in the family.

All Dominion Traders products come packed in their own boxes, which has spawned another family business in another part of the city. Two floors of a house are occupied by people making the boxes. The box makers collect paper and cardboard from all over the city and then recycle it into new cardboard, fashioning various sizes of boxes from it. To make them more attractive, leftover paper from paper factories is used to cover them, using one type of paper until that runs out, then employing another color or design.