Simply empowering

The Elimai line of travel products uses colourful textiles woven by the differently-abled residents of Krupa Home

:: CHITRADEEPA ANANTHARAM

"The most popular section at the campus of Krupa Home is the weaving room, and almost every resident wants to get in there and spend some time," chuckles Dr Radhika Soundararajan, coordinator of this 10-acre residential facility for adults with disabilities run by AIM for Seva at Sriperumbudur, near Chennai.

"There is colour, activity, songs and fun at our loom room, and quite naturally, other residents who are usually involved in gardening, marble paper making or agarbatti assembling, also want to sit at this unit. The loom room is always cheerful and filled with positivity," she explains. There are three looms at Krupa, and four of the residents are trained in weaving with assistance from three helpers.

Design speak (Top) Residents of Krupa at the loom room, Elimai's travel accessories ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We engage the differently-abled residents in hand loom weaving as a therapeutic rehabilitation for their physical, mental, social and vocational abilities. The warp and weft is restricted to creating brightly-coloured rough textiles with check and stripe prints, " she says.

Even though they were making bags and a few other utility items with the woven textiles, Soundarajan wanted to take it to the next step by developing concept products. "We approached Fariha Begum who had worked with Bhawani bedsheet weavers of Tamil Nadu and created her line of leather bags, Therku. She visited our centre and was excited to see the close knit rough handloom woven by Krupa residents. Based on her suggestion, we decided to launch travel line products," she says.

"The material woven at Krupa has knots and is uneven and rough. But each knot has a story, and in fact we attach a weaver tag to all the products in the line," says Soundarajan. Elimai (simplicity in English) offers passport holders, laptop cases, sling and tote bags, shopping bags and book bags.

They are working on adding more utility products in this line. "When we showed the Elimai products (the finished product has been developed by Fariha) to the weavers of our home, they were thrilled by the outcome. They also came up with some suggestions," she says.

The idea behind Krupa is to provide shelter for differently-abled adults and enable them to be meaningfully occupied as it adds to their sense of self worth and happiness. Residents treat the various units in the facility at Krupa Home like their office and spend the day working; Sunday is their day off. "Sundays are chaotic at Krupa Home. Sundays seem to be boring for the residents. While on other days, there are activities that keep them involved. Everyone here likes go to office even on a Sunday, probably to the loom room," smiles Soundarajan.

Elimai products are available at AIM For Seva, Mylapore, 10 am to 5 pm, 24987955.