It almost seems too simple: a skein of wool saving a life. For women of Nepal, beaten down by a complex and consuming social status, wool is a welcome reality.

Hasroon is one of these women.

Hasroon was married at 18 and living a happy life with her infant son and husband . . . until her in-laws began demanding dowry money. When Hasroon’s family couldn’t pay, she was beaten, humiliated, and ultimately covered with gasoline, pushed into the bathroom, and set on fire.

Today, Hasroon works for Padhma Creations, a social enterprise founded by Kesang Yudron ’08, a Saint Ben’s accounting major. Padhma is the Sanskrit word for lotus, the flower that emerges pure and white from the muddy swamp. Kesang believes it is a fitting symbol for the women artisans, like Hasroom, who work at Padhma Creations. Padhma Creations gives Hasroon the training and job she needs to provide a secure and supportive life for her and her son.

Padhma Creations partners with nearly 70 women from neighboring villages of Nepalgunj, Bardiya, and Surkhet in Nepal. Wool is divided among their families who then make berets, scarves, socks, and other items in their homes or in shelters for women without homes. These woolens are then sold, and the money reinvested in programs to support the artisans and their children.

Kesang thought of the idea in 2000 when she and her father visited Nepalgunj, a border town between Nepal and India. “I remember being shocked at the sight of a 13-year-old village girl being rescued from trafficking by the police,” Kesang said. “The story was that a distant relative of hers had intentions of selling her to a brothel in Mumbai. This incident created a lasting and profound impression on my life.”

Thousands of young Nepali women are trafficked to India every year for prostitution, child labor, and slavery, Kesang said. Others are victims of domestic abuse. All have no jobs or paying skills. “Padhma Creations not only helps these women but saves their families from a life of spiraling poverty.”

Padhma Creations aims to provide women artisans with health, education and social welfare programs. The company pays knitters wages that are higher than the market rate in Nepal; it also puts away 5% of profits towards the Padhma Creations Health Fund to provide knitters and their children with basic health care, an expense many Nepalese simply cannot afford. The company also provided its first education scholarships for children of the knitters this winter.

A year into its operations, Padhma Creations is looking to colleges and universities as ideal markets for their products. “We want to raise awareness about the lives of people in other countries,” Kesang said. “Our hope is to influence a new generation of empathetic young adults who will be socially conscious consumers.”

Or, like Kesang, they’ll become entrepreneurs investing in human life worldwide.