



The success story of Women from Karimpuzha Handloom Village

Karimpuzha, Grama Panchayath in Palakkad district of Kerala, is famous for Kerala handlooms. Around 300 families are engaged in traditional handloom weaving in this small village. They are doing this job for decades. Sreevishnumaya handloom unit was formed by 5 NHG members in the year 2007 with the support of Kudumbashree to find new avenues of income generation. They had joined Kudumbashree Neighborhood Group way back in 2006. The support and encouragement of ADS and Panchayath vice president (their ward member) led to the formation of this unit. They took a loan of Rs 2 lakhs from Canara bank with Kudumbashree support and started the production with their own spinning wheel. Now the unit is very famous and they are getting so many orders from outside Palakkad and Kerala and are teaching the weaving classes also. So many persons are coming to their village for studying the weaving and the unit members are conducting classes for them. The unit have participated in several Kudumbashree trade fairs held in New Delhi, Shillong, Odisha, etc and their products were widely appreciated by the visitors.

Reasons for your success?

Our unit has become very successful because weaving is our traditional occupation and our families were engaged in weaving for generations. Being part of a weaving village, everyone bought products from other weaving families and sold to the customers. Through this, they also paved the way for own marketing channels for the handloom products in our village. One of the important highlight of our unit is that we are selling customized product. We produce designer products (Kerala saree/ Kasavu mundu) as per orders and taste of their customers. We are getting many orders for marriage functions to arrange identical patterned sarees and set mundu. When we get big orders beyond the production capacity of the 5 members, we give subcontract to other families to deliver the order in time.

Challenges faced?

From the very beginning of the unit we had to face so many challenges. Since we are from orthodox families, it was difficult for us to travel and stay away from home for marketing purposes. In addition, only one member in our unit knew to write Malayalam and others were illiterate. It was impossible to market a product then. Activities of Kudumbashree inspired us to find solutions to all these problems. A broader world of opportunities was opened in front of us through our association with Kudumbashree Community Based Organization network. For the first time in our life, we participated in Kudumbashree mela which was conducted in District Mission Palakkad. It turned out to be a good start. From that time onwards we were able to be a part of Several trade fairs conducted in and outside of the state (New Delhi, Shillong, Odisha). Now, we have the confidence to travel anywhere to find better market for their products without any fear.

Turning point in business?

The major challenges we faced in the beginning of our enterprise was to find the capital. Since all members are from economically backward families, it was impossible for us to find a large sum of money for raw materials and machineries. Weaving the Kasavu sarees/mundu required costly machineries like spinning wheel, spindles, fly shuttle loaded with spindle. Raw materials like silk and cotton yarns which were to be bought from Coimbatore were also costly. Purchase of small quantity of raw materials from distant locations was economically not viable. At this time Canara Bank's financial Support for Kudumbashree ME scheme helped us. The bank provided a loan of 2 Lakh and this amount constituted the first stepping stone to generate 4 lakhs of annual income in the first year.

Future plan or ambition?

Karimpuzha is a flood affected area and also one of the unit members lost her house and spinning wheel through the flood. Now they are going through the biggest crisis they ever met. But they are that much confident that they will survive this crisis also. Nowadays there is a huge demand for printed, embroidery sarees and mural painted sarees. Now we are focusing our business on these type new model sarees.

Most Happy moment?

In 2012, while our unit was attending a Kudumbashree trade fair in New Delhi and we got an order from a Delhi based Malayali women for 50 sarees. The unit members were so excited and they delivered the product on time and they got appreciation from them for the timely delivery.

Message to aspiring women ?

Kudumbashree is a venue of opportunities for those women who have not been able to express their abilities. Before being part of the Kudumbashree we are in the shadow of men, but not now. Kudumbashree made us to travel anywhere without anyone's support and without fear.

One of the important highlight of our unit is that we are selling customized product. We produce designer products (Kerala saree/ Kasavu mundu) as per orders and taste of their customers. We are getting many orders for marriage functions to arrange identical patterned sarees and set mundu.

Anju Anand