



Jewel shaped fortune

The exquisite art of making 'Gahana Bari' (dried black gram laid out in jewel shape), a traditional craft of Purba Medinipur could be deftly used by Jayashree Giri and the members of 'Indira Mahila Swasahayak Dal' (SHG) of Keshabpur Jalpai near Mahishadal, Purba Medinipur. The story of Jayashree is a story of courage and entrepreneurship bringing success and resulting in women empowerment. She was quite passionate about the craft from early childhood and when in the seventh standard she could perform the whole procedure by herself.

The passion remained even after her marriage. With no one in the family gainfully employed, she had to take control to improve the financial condition of the family. It was difficult, more so in view of the fact that in her social circle the women were very much limited to doing household chores and raising children.

Her education being strong, she started with private tuition. Student strength grew and at some point of time she realised that something bigger was in the offing. It was not for herself alone; she thought of bringing other women of the village out of the daily drudgery and join her in an entrepreneurial journey. Making use of her sheer willpower, her skills in making this exquisite product and a dash of entrepreneurship, she started making Gahana Bori by lots and also started to visit different offices in the block and district headquarters to sell them.

The beautiful designs along with impeccable quality earned her a name among the connoisseurs of this exotic food. One day, some district officials from DRDC visited her house and documented the process. The promotional activities that followed brought people, including senior





officers from Kolkata to her house and an offer was extended to join a training on marketing at Rajarhat, which she readily accepted.

Under her initiative, Indira Mahila Swasahayak Dal was formed on 4th May 2001 and the SHG could establish itself quite fast. She was still not content with what she could achieve and looked up to something bigger. In 2009, she mobilised local SHGs to form “Khushi Activity Cluster” in which she was a natural choice for the position of Secretary. This activity cluster connects 150-200 women from nine Gram Panchayats, all engaged in making Bori. The committee has eleven representatives, including representation from all nine GPs.

In 2012, in a symposium at the State Institute of Panchayats & Rural Development she participated in an interesting competition on Bori making. The challenge was to prepare the most beautiful and delectable Bori.

She won the competition. As the prize she received a set of large machines worth Rs.16 lakh which included a deep fridge, an industrial dryer and a grinding machine. These are still at the block office premises and is used by a large number of women.

At one point, her husband also joined her efforts and obtained government support through Swami Vivekananda Swanirbhar Karmasansthan Prkalpa (SVSKP). Her daughter too is an SHG member engaged in the same work. Indira SHG has availed bank loans six times. Loans ranged between twenty five thousand rupees to three lakh and a half.

She has been participating in the State Sabala Mela from the very initial stage of the fair. Sale figures are quite impressive. Even with such a relatively low priced product they could sell in the range of fifty thousand rupees to ninety thousand rupees. Her group and she participated in several fairs including fairs in Delhi, Mumbai and several districts of the state.

Her motivation is to bring rural women out of home and take up income generating activities to succeed in enhancing their livelihood and embellishing their personal lives.

