

Weaving dreams in Jute, Gadag

A tiny village in Karnataka is scripting a quiet tale of empowerment by weaving dreams in jute. SSRDP started a jute bag-making unit in Bahadoor Baddi in Koppala, about 20 kms from Gadag town in December 2010. In the space of a month, it has already transformed the lives of more than 30 women including school drop-outs.

Twelve-year old Afroza, clad in a black salwar kameez, chatters excitedly about her newly learnt skill which has added a new, enriching dimension in her life. A shy and timid school drop-out, she has metamorphosed into a confident, enthusiastic teenager. "I am very happy now," she contends. "Being the youngest of four siblings, I didn't pursue school after my seventh class but as I wanted to make a difference to my life, I joined the bag-making class. And I have never felt better."

All around the village, there are shining examples of the women's inner quest to succeed and excel. In the neatly painted room are ten sewing machines and meticulously stacked jute bags.



The Art of Living Foundation has been working in the villages in north Karnataka for some time. "When we came to this village, we felt like doing something for the women here. It was thus that the idea of starting a jute bag tailoring unit came up," shares Joyce Prakash, Project Co-ordinator, Divine Karnataka Project. A teacher from the Bangalore unit was called and soon, the center was filled with young enthusiasts willing to learn. They were trained for one month and began rolling out different kinds of jute bags from tiffin carriers, luggage bags, mobile holders, wallets, school bags to trendy college bags.

The place has been let out free by 40-year-old Lakshmi who feels delighted to be part of the beautiful journey. One of the budding entrepreneurs at work, also known as Lakshmi, is an inspiring story in herself. After being affected by polio in her childhood, she had lost the will to live. Her brother introduced her to The Art of Living program which became a

turning point in her life. She recalls, “I could see the difference in myself after the regular practice of the Sudarshan Kriya” a breathing technique patented by the Art of Living Foundation.

Today, as a teacher of the tailoring unit, Lakshmi is a role model that the others among these new age entrepreneurs look up to. In her fresh take on life, she believes life has been gracious to her and is keen to share her skill with as many as possible.

This place weaves a tale every day, says little Afroza. She adds “My wish is to become a teacher and teach this skill to as many as I can. I know I can make a difference too.”

The small village might fail to get a second glimpse from a passerbys, but this is no ordinary village. This is where dreams are being woven.

