

# SUBHALAXMI SHOWS THE WAY TO EMPOWERMENT

A CSR initiative has transformed lives of several rural women in Jharsuguda



Subhalaxmi has given us an identity and credibility. The exposure we got from Subhalaxmi has helped us interact with many people which was unimaginable for us at one point.

Pankajini Oram, director of the cooperative society

MAYANK BHUSAN PANI  
@\_Jharsuguda

A project that started 12 years back as a corporate social responsibility initiative of Vedanta Limited in Jharsuguda, has now become a movement for empowering women and developing communities.

The initiative, Subhalaxmi Women Cooperative Society, began with just 10 rural women who had rarely stepped beyond their hamlets to look for livelihood opportunities. Today, these and many more women of Jharsuguda are owning and running their own enterprises ranging from agricultural activities to retail stores. The be-

ginning was not smooth though as women had to face resistance from their families. They however, decided to undergo skill training in various sectors like tailoring, agriculture, mushroom farming, horticulture and poultry farming by Vedanta. With each of them contributing ₹100, a treasury of the society was formed.

Later, specialised training was provided to interested women and they could avail loans for procuring machinery and equipment under Vedanta's 'Udyami fund'.

Over a year later, the initiative started bearing fruit with women earning their livelihood from small ventures that they started after skill training. Sub-

sequently, a board of directors was formed exclusively for the cooperative society members.

Currently, the society has 3,957 women members from 72 villages located in the periphery of Vedanta Limited.

Of them, the society has so far created 1,794 women entrepreneurs who have started a number of businesses. The treasury fund has gone up to ₹2.93 crore, including their welfare fund, Mahila Kalyan Panthi of ₹17.35 lakh.

For financial inclusion, the society members are involved in compulsory and voluntary saving schemes. The compulsory savings was started with deposit of just ₹50 per month

which was collected from their doorstep.

In 2014, the co-operative society completed its project phase and became self-sufficient.

One of the directors of the society, Pankajini Oram said, "Subhalaxmi has given us an identity and credibility. The exposure we got from Subhalaxmi has helped us interact with many people which was unimaginable for us at one point."

Talking about their vision, vice-president of the society Mounabati Bag said they now aim to make Subhalaxmi cooperative society a 10,000 member family.

## THE SKILL PROJECT

Demand for employment gained momentum soon after Vedanta Limited started operations in Jharsuguda. The company launched a livelihood initiative 'Vedanta Integrated Jana Jeevika Yojana' and subsequently, Subhalaxmi Bahumukhee Mahila Samabaya Samiti Limited was set up in 2005 to provide livelihood opportunities to women in rural areas.



## J'singhpur to felicitate 100 women

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@\_Jagatsinghpur

FOR the first time, the district administration will honour 100 women who have made a mark in various fields on the occasion of International Women's Day on Sunday.

These women are from politics, healthcare, agriculture, science, judiciary, public administration, self-help groups (SHGs) and civil society.

The Department of Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti will felicitate women SHGs for empowering themselves and achieving social and financial independence.

The members have taken up various income generating activities to become self-reliant. Besides, they are also involved in various social activities and awareness programmes on women's rights, child marriage and labour, domestic violence and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan which has brought a marked change in the thought and behaviour of the community, said Jagatsinghpur Collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra.

Apart from the SHGs, successful women leaders and officers of the district, who have lent their services to the Government under different capacities and performed their duties with utmost sincerity and diligence, will also be honoured on the day.