



On the 'fast-track' to success

The story of Lalitha C Gowda

This is the story of a woman who is determined to rise. Glass ceilings, patriarchy, gender pay gap, sexist workplace policies, and just male privilege — a lot of challenges dot a woman's path to success, but many have taken on the mantle to power through them all and succeeded against all odds.



Lalitha Chandrashekar Gowda is a housewife living with her husband and two children in Siddapura Taluk Kodagibailu village, Bidrkan GP, Uttara Kannada District. She has studied upto 10th standard. Her husband works as a daily wage worker in a landlord's field nearby. The children are studying in school.

When the MANUVIKASA team visited the village for Sangha formation, Mahadevi was impressed with the concept of the Sangha, and decided to become a member of Mahalakshmi MANUVIKASA Swasahaaya Sangha (SHG.) After the formation of the sangha, members jointly took a loan of Rs. 4.5 lakhs from NABARD

As a housewife Lalitha always had a dream of achieving something in her life. "After I underwent trainings conducted by MANUVUKASA, I decided to start a fast-food business of my own. For this, I took a loan of Rs.50,000 from a private lender," says Lalitha.

"Recognising the non-availability of these kinds of shops in the local area, I decided to open my fast-food shop in middle of the two urban areas. In order to capture this niche market and grab the attention of the customers and other workers, I focused on making one or two snack items during evening times. And, it is worked very well," adds Lalitha.

Named 'Shri Chowdeshwari Slow Fast food', Lalitha's shop opens daily at 5pm and closes at 10 pm. During business hours, she makes egg rice, gobi manchurian, egg bhelpuri, egg mandakki, omelette and cut mirchi. Each food item is priced



differently. She purchases raw materials for her shop in Belagi village and gets the fresh vegetables and other items at wholesale rates.

The shop is open all the seven days of the week. "My husband helps me to prepare food. My children also do their bit by helping me with cooking and serving food during school holidays. I enjoy the time spent with them in the shop," says Lalitha. Though she faced many problems initially, right from finding a proper place to start her eatery, she reminiscences with gratitude the help extended by the villagers in overcoming them.

Item	Plates per Day	Prise
Gobi Manchurian	25	30
Egg Rice	50	35
Cut Mirchi	50	25
Egg mandakki	40	25
Egg bhelpuri	40	40

After spending about Rs.40,000/- per month towards her business, she is able to save Rs.10,000/- per month. Within two years of starting the fast-food business, the family has been able to start constructing their own house, which is nearing completion.

"When my wife told me that she wanted to open a fast-food centre, I was not convinced that this would work, and outright refused to start this kind of venture. But, day by day, our business is getting better. My wife's confidence has paid off and I am happy about it," says Chandrashekar Naik.

"Lalitha has kept the shop spic and span; the food is also very tasty and hygienic. The price is affordable and thus, we like coming to this place to

have food,” says Shankrappa a villager from Kodagibailu. Since the eatery is strategically placed between two villages and no other place like hers nearabout, it has bolstered the growth of Lalitha’s eatery. What started as an eatery out a small hat, has now moved to a small shop.

Speaking of her future plans, Lalitha says, “My shop is too tiny to seat 9-10 people at once. When one or two families visit my eatery at the same time, there is no proper place for them to sit. So, I intend to expand my eatery and have sufficient seating arrangements”. Lalitha also plans take catering orders for private parties and functions, in order to earn more during the festive seasons and holidays. “Once I expand my business, I wish to provide job opportunities for my village women who are interested” says Lalitha.

Lalitha Naik is now planning to start an arecanut plant selling business. She has been growing 500 areca nut seeds in the backyard of her house.
