

Inspiring through her Art: Meenakshi's Journey to Self-Sufficiency



Meenakshi is empowering India, one dupatta at a time

Meenakshi, a 22-year-old History and Geography graduate, lives in Matanhail, Jhajjar, and has a contagiously cheerful personality that resonated hope in everyone she encounters. Meenakshi has always aimed to build a financially independent future for herself with the help of her education and will. She detests the idea of marrying and limiting her dreams to the four walls of a house. Her independent and fierce opinions are in conflict with her father's, yet she kept looking for opportunities to gain employable skills. She chanced upon a course for bangle-making under the National Rural Livelihood Mission Federation. However, due to mobility restrictions, she had to give up this opportunity in search of a more reliable one.

Meenakshi, found herself fascinated by Madhubani paintings and enrolled for the workshop. The training went on for six months, and she dedicated herself to mastering the art. An eye-opening instance in her life was selling the first Madhubani *dupatta*, which she had painted herself. There was no looking back after that. Over the next two years, Meenakshi managed to sell several *dupattas*, honing her skills, and simultaneously making an income. A *dupatta* which took her a week to finish initially, she was gradually able to complete within a day. The sense of fulfilment and purpose that stemmed through her with the sale of every *dupatta* motivated her to work harder. Seeing her efforts and sincerity towards her work, her parents were moved, and decided to support their daughter through her journey toward financial independence. Meenakshi is now able to sell an average of ten to fifteen *dupattas* every month and is earning a steady income.

Meenakshi was part of the WE-LEAD (Women Empowerment through Livelihoods, Entrepreneurship and Access through Digitalisation), a project by Development Alternatives, supported by DB Schenker. This project was designed to leverage technology and bridge informational, skill, and resource gaps for creating sustainable economic opportunities through entrepreneurship. She is empowering India, one *dupatta* at a time.

She is as proud of her progress as her parents; contributing to her household expenses while funding her own education- Meenakshi is an inspiration to everyone around her. She aspires to give the civil services exams and get a government job. She is happy about the fact that she can continue her coaching and studies on her own income. She values the impact entrepreneurship has created in her life and the huge potential it has in the present world with a huge scarcity of income opportunities. Her strife and journey exemplify the beautiful fruition hard work brings, and the difference art can bring in generating livelihoods.