

From Vision to Reality: The Success Story of Archana's Milk Collection Center



“Dream a little dream” – this phrase holds a lot of meaning when it comes to realising dreams that seem unattainable! At 20, Archana, from Sikri village in Mirzapur, isn't just preparing for her final year BA exams—she's also running her own milk collection centre.

Her journey began not in a boardroom or a classroom, but at a humble home, where she and her younger sister, Vandana, would think of ways to lift their family out of hardship. Growing up in an agricultural family, Archana witnessed struggles firsthand as her parents faced difficulties providing for her and her five siblings. This fuelled her resolve to ease their burden and contribute to the family's well-being.

Archana's father, a hardworking man who sells milk in the market, always emphasised the importance of education. He ensured that none of his daughters were denied the opportunity to study, even offering support to his married daughters if they wished to continue their education. This supportive environment instilled in her a deep appreciation for learning and a desire to make a difference.

Her journey into entrepreneurship began during a community meeting organised under the Accelerating Entrepreneurship through Social Innovation (AeSI) project by Development Alternatives and the State Bank of India Foundation. At this meeting, she voiced the challenges her father faced in selling milk, which often led to losses as it got spoiled. As a solution, she proposed establishing direct connections with larger dairy companies like Parag and Amul.

With the support received after the meeting, Archana met with representatives from Parag Dairy Company. They discussed the necessary paperwork and the benefits of collaboration. In November 2023, she invested INR 22,000 to procure milk collection machines and equipment, setting the stage for a new chapter in her life.

Archana, along with her sister Vandana, took charge of operating the milk collection centre. Their daily routine begins at 6 a.m., as farmers bring in their milk. Every day, they collect 250 litres of milk in the morning and 150 litres in the evening. They manage the business operations, from checking the fat content and quality of the milk to handling bookkeeping and savings. They then sell the milk to Parag Dairy Company, making a profit of 2.5% per litre, which helps them earn a substantial monthly income of INR 20,000.

Despite societal pressures to conform to traditional roles and get married, Archana remains steadfast in her mission. She wants to inspire other girls in her village to embrace entrepreneurship, believing that financial independence will empower them. She passionately says, “Hum chahte hai ke sab yuva log bhi hum jaise kaam kar rahe hai vese kaam kare, aur humse aur aage jaye. Larkiyon ko udyam karna chahiye, vo kisse aur pe depend nahi hongi, khud ka kam karegi toh khud ka paisa kamayegi” (I want everyone to do what I am doing and go even further. Girls should take up entrepreneurship; they won't have to depend on anyone else. If they work for themselves, they will have their own money.) Her achievements have made her a role model in her community. People respect her and look up to her, and this recognition fuels her determination to keep going. When asked about who her favourite movie hero is, Archana's eyes light up as she says, “My father is my hero. The heroes in movies are fictional and made-up, but my father is a real hero.” Looking to the future, she dreams of expanding her business further by establishing a bulk milk collection centre with chilling machines and creating more jobs for people. This would allow milk to be stored for two to three days, enhancing their operations and creating a sustainable and profitable dairy business that benefits the entire community. Archana's story shows the power of determination, the importance of family support, and the impact of innovative thinking.