



Prabha Rajput: Striving towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency



Prabha Rajput, a 36-year-old entrepreneur from Maharajpura in Niwari, has undergone a remarkable transformation in her livelihood. Once involved in a small grocery business after leaving her role in the Sakshi FPO's spice unit, Prabha faced financial struggles that made it difficult to support her family. Despite running a Self-Help Group (SHG) with ten other women, their business lacked sufficient profits, and Prabha felt the weight of unfulfilled aspirations.

Determined to create a better future, Prabha sought guidance from TARAGram, a local development initiative, which introduced her to the Work4Progress (W4P) Project. Under the W4P initiative, women were provided with a 15-day training on operating e-rickshaws. The training was comprehensive, combining hands-on experience in the field with classroom learning. This empowered Prabha and her peers with the skills and knowledge they needed to succeed.

With support from the W4P Project, Prabha took a crucial step towards her entrepreneurial journey. She secured a loan of Rs. 30,000 from Orchha Canara Bank, along with a further Rs. 1,26,000 to fund the purchase of her e-rickshaw. With assistance from Umakant Tripathi ji, who facilitated the loan process, Prabha bought the e-rickshaw and drove it back to her village. This new venture not only increased her self-confidence but also opened the door to a wealth of opportunities.

In a significant turn of events, Prabha's e-rickshaw became a vital part of Orchha's tourism ecosystem. The Madhya Pradesh government, recognising her contribution, organised the Namaste Orchha program, where Prabha had the honour of chauffeuring departmental officials on a tour of Orchha's pilgrimage sites in her e-rickshaw. This event highlighted the impact of her entrepreneurial venture and the role of women-led businesses in driving local tourism.

As more women in Orchha followed suit, the government took action to create an even more conducive environment for women entrepreneurs. The collector of Orchha introduced a policy that only women-operated e-rickshaws would run within the city, effectively eliminating the competition from male-driven taxis. This not only ensured the safety and empowerment of women but also established a thriving network of women entrepreneurs in the region.

Today, Prabha and her fellow women drivers are reaping the rewards of their hard work. They now provide safe, reliable transport for tourists and locals alike, ensuring that families are supported and livelihoods are sustained. The W4P initiative has not only transformed Prabha's life but has also positively impacted the entire community by providing women with the tools and opportunities to thrive.

Through her perseverance and dedication, Prabha Rajput has not only changed her own life but has become a beacon of change and hope for other women in her region. Her story is a testament to the power of women's entrepreneurship and the importance of inclusive development in creating lasting, positive change.