



## Bitra Saideswara Rao: Shaping stability through skilled craftsmanship



Bitra Saideswara Rao spends long hours carefully shaping and finishing delicate gold ornaments by hand in Mangalagiri. The work demands patience, precision, and years of practice. What began as a way to earn a steady income has gradually become a source of stability, confidence, and identity for him.

At 43, Saideswara Rao comes from a modest background. He studied up to senior secondary school and, like many others around him, started working early to support his family. There was no fixed roadmap for the future, only the need to find reliable work that could help sustain the household.

His journey began to take shape after he joined the Mangalagiri Gold Jewellery Cluster, supported under the SFURTI programme with the Indian Micro

Enterprises Development Foundation (IMEDF) as the nodal agency. Through the cluster, artisans like him gained access to more regular work opportunities, greater exposure, and the reassurance of being part of a more organised ecosystem.

Over the last six years, he has steadily strengthened his skills as a gold jewellery artisan. Much of the work continues to be done by hand, from shaping intricate patterns to polishing fine details that require careful attention. Over time, he has developed both confidence and pride in his craft. What once felt like routine labour has gradually turned into skilled work that he strongly identifies with.

The change in his income, though gradual, has made a meaningful difference in his life. Earlier, he earned around ₹9,000 a month. Today, his income has increased to nearly ₹15,000 per month, marking a rise of around 65–70%. While modest, the increase has brought greater predictability to household finances and reduced periods of uncertainty.

At home, this has translated into improved living conditions and a more stable routine. Monthly expenses are managed with greater ease, and there is less pressure around day-to-day financial needs. Decisions related to household spending, children's needs, and small investments are now taken with more confidence. His role within the family has also evolved. He is no longer only contributing financially but participating more actively in household decisions, with a stronger sense of responsibility and involvement.

There has also been a quieter shift in how he sees himself.

Earlier, work often felt uncertain and individual. Today, being part of the cluster has given him a stronger feeling of connection and recognition. He interacts more confidently with others and feels that his skills are valued within the community. These changes may not always be visible, but they influence how he approaches both work and life.

Like most artisans, his journey has not been without challenges. Work still depends heavily on market demand, and opportunities to work independently remain limited. There are periods when earnings fluctuate and long-term security feels uncertain. Yet over the years, he has learned to navigate these realities by staying consistent, improving his skills, and adapting to the pace of work available.



Looking ahead, his aspirations are simple but meaningful.

He hopes to someday start a small jewellery unit of his own. The dream is not driven by rapid expansion, but by the desire for independence, to take his own orders, manage his own work, and build something that belongs to him. To achieve this, he knows he will need financial support, better market access, and continued guidance. But compared to earlier, the possibility now feels far more attainable.

Saideswara Rao's journey is not one of sudden transformation or dramatic success. It is about small, steady shifts, in income, confidence, and the way he engages with his work and family. In Mangalagiri, as he continues to shape gold into ornaments, he is also quietly shaping a more stable and hopeful future for himself.