

Celebrating womanhood through spices

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JODHPUR: A woman sitting in the famous spice market in Jodhpur's Clock Tower area, describing various spices to customers, is a rare sight. But for Neelam this is an everyday affair. The computer engineer who in the past worked for Wipro in Bangalore talks to her customers in detail about spices. It illustrates her comprehensive knowledge not only about the Indian spices but also various food practices and climatic conditions in the customers' countries.

Behind this seemingly pleasant picture, there is a long struggle, which Neelam along with her six sisters and mother endured in the past one decade. Her father passed away in 2004 leaving behind the shop for his daughters. It is also a way to celebrate womanhood in this male dominated society. "Today all my sisters are proud to be women, there are no regrets", said Neelam, when asked if the sisters ever wanted to be born as men.

These sisters, true ambassador of Indian Spice, also have a movie on them which was shown in the second London Feminist Film Festival. They had to overcome plenty of hurdles and problems including a failed acid attack and other dirty tricks by their own family and competitors. Not the ones to be demoralized, the sisters along with their mother Bhagwanti's finally took the reins of the spice business set up by their father Mohanlal.

"My eldest sister Usha, who is married now, took over the reins of the shop to carry forward the business. The rivals tried every possible trick to discourage us and drag us into legal battle and destroy our business but with my mother's determination, we took on every slur, direct or indirect, tangible or intangible", said another sister Nikki, who chose not to continue her education after Class XII and instead have command over several foreign languages.

Their mother, Bhagwanti, who made sure that her daughters get good education, recalled the challenge by a fellow trader. "When we took over the reins of the shop, he challenged us that we will be forced to shut down within 6 months but I counter-challenged him that one day I will have 7 shops, one each for my daughters".

Neelam added, "Today we have 5 shops in the city, with the new one exclusively for tourists, who are interested in knowing more about the Indian spices." Their dream is to have a shop in Europe. "And we will do it. It was my father's dream," said Nikki.

JODHPUR: At the world famous Spice Market at the historic Clock Tower of Jodhpur, Neelam is the only female spice manufacturers and seller. With the equanimity she, an ex-Wipro computer engineer at Bangalore, describes the spice

to the customers, it illustrates her comprehensive study not only on the Indian spice but also the food practices and climatic conditions in the country of customers.

But behind this seemingly pleasant picture, there is a long struggle, which she with her 6 sisters and mother had endured in past one decade not just as a compulsion to sustain and trail the dream of his father, who passed away in 2004 leaving the shop, but also to celebrate the womanhood in this male chauvinist world. "We today feel proud to be women, no regrets", Neelam beamed, when asked if they ever wished to be male.

These 7 sisters, true ambassador of Indian Spice, who also have a movie on them shown in the second London Feminist Film Festival, together fought to overcome and sail through a failed acid attack and club attack on one of them and every nefarious tricks by none other than the family members and the competitors that boarded to their character assassination, in order to demoralise them and wrest their only shop then. They, with support of their mother Bhagwanti not only took the reins of the spice business set by father Mohanlal but battled all odds for their self-respect as women.

"My eldest sister Usha, who is married now, took the reins of the shop to carry forward the business and more over the trust, my father had built across the customers from different countries as a spice seller. But fellow sellers tried every trick to discourage us, corrupt us, lure us, drag us into legal battle and destroy our business but with determination of my mother, we took on every offensive or slur, direct or indirect, tangible or intangible", said other sister Nikki, who chose to stop her education at 12th class and possesses decent command over many foreign languages.

Mother Bhagwanti, who made it sure that her daughters get good education, recalled the challenge hurled to her by a fellow trader. "When we took the reins of the shop of my husband, he challenged that we will be forced to shut down within 6 months but I counter-challenged him that one day I would have 7 shops, one for each of my daughters".

"And today we have 5 shops in the city, with the last one recently opened exclusively for the tourist groups, who really want to understand the Indian spice and savour it", interrupted Neelam. Growing strong and confident day by day, their dream is to have a shop in Europe now. "And we will do it. It was the dream of my father", darted Nikki.