

Home-based Worker's Oral History



Tech transforms lives: How a young Rupali in Nashik changes her story with the use of technology

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Rupali, 22 years, bakes cakes from home. She is also pursuing an undergraduate degree in Science. She lives with her mother, father, and two siblings in a family of five. Her mother is a street vendor, who sells on her cart items like bindis, bangles, and kids clothes near the Pavan nagar area of Nashik.

Due to massive debts, Rupali's father fled to Surat. He still works in the factory, but he no longer provides for his family. When the financial disaster started, Rupali stepped in to help the family. During the Covid-19 lockdown period, she watched videos and tutorials on the internet to learn the art of baking. From her initial earnings, she purchased an icing machine and a spinning table. Gradually, she began receiving orders, and now receives 10 to 15 orders every month.

Rupali bakes cakes for birthdays and anniversaries. She described how, on Mother's Day, she had to finish six orders in three hours. In these situations, her sister assists her. She bakes a wide range of cakes, including chocolate, vanilla, pineapple, strawberry, and rasmalai. She charges Rs. 300-350 for a half kilogram cake. The price of special cakes in high demand, like Doremon cake and Doll cake, is between Rs. 400-450. She currently uses WhatsApp and phone calls to accept orders. She is now capable of taking even bigger strides and expanding her business to support her family. She wants to start baking classes and aspires to rent a bigger house.

India has contributed significantly to the digital revolution over the past several years. India will have 1 billion smartphone users by 2026, much of this demand coming from urban and non urban settings. The rise in the number of women who own personal mobile phones and use them over the past four years in India has had a substantial impact on the demand for smartphones powered by the internet. It has also created better access to education and employment opportunities, especially for those women and girls who face restrictions on their mobility and cannot step out of their homes. Rupali's story provides one such illustration of how women and girls from low-income families could realise their full potential from having full access to digital tools.