


THE ONE-STRAW REVOLUTION IN BALAGHAT



Naxalite crisis. But this has not deterred her from continuing to live and progress in her village. She has a bio-gas plant on her land which provides enough fuel for their large family kitchen. She uses the slurry from the bio-gas plant as fertilizer for growing vegetables. To supplement her fertilizer requirements, Chhaya has a vermicompost pit to produce additional manure. Chhaya uses seeds from her own fields; she is completely opposed to using genetically modified seeds. She also makes her own natural pesticide, made out of Cow Urine, Neem leaves, and Basil. On the field boundaries, she has planted lac, which protects the bunding and provides her with additional revenues from lac as well. Her poultry farm is doing extremely well, as she continues to apply the technical skills learnt from the training programme at the Agriculture University.

women's group in her village to spread awareness and knowledge on organic and natural farming practices. Today, Chhaya is seen as a role model for farmers in the region and several of them are adopting the practices perfected by her. This has boosted her confidence as she continues to persist in her methods, innovate and succeed.

Unsung, unheard but passionate; Chhaya is showing the way to farmers in the vicinity, how environmental preservation and making rich earnings from agriculture can go hand-in-hand. And what better way to ensure that we leave behind a healthy earth for generations to come.

Masanobu Fukuoka, Japanese naturalist and agriculture scholar published his path-breaking book "One Straw Revolution" in 1975, which has continued to influence environmentalists and nature lovers across the globe. There are a large number of people today, conscientious farmers, mainly, who believe that Fukuoka's world of postulations in 1975 have great relevance in today's times of degrading soil, over usage of pesticides and fertilizers and scarce water resources. But who would have thought, that there was a young Indian woman from a small village, Arinda, located 65 kilometers from little known Balaghat district, who practiced the principles of organic and natural farming practices, despite huge challenges. Meet Chhaya Patle. Chhaya holds a post-graduate degree in Science. And she controls the farming practices of the huge tract of land owned by her family-on her own terms.

Much before Chhaya was sent for a skill development programme by the Nehru Yuva Kendra to the Jawaharlal Nehru Agriculture University in Jabalpur, she was already convinced about the virtues of natural and organic farming. The training helped hone her skills and improved her understanding of natural agricultural practices. The topics covered included developing organic fertilizers and pesticides, floriculture, mushroom cultivation, vegetable and medicinal plant farming and poultry rearing. She remains grateful to the agriculture expert trainers who reinforced her belief that water, forests and land were precious resources which needed to be treated as scarce and conserved to be for generations to come.

Chhaya lives in an area impacted by the

