

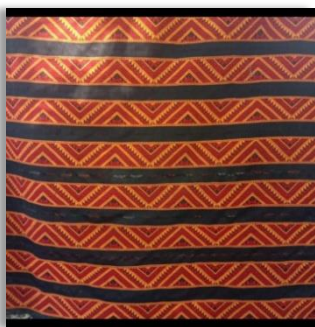


Chalu Loying
Tribal Artisan
Mekhala chaddar weaver

In hope of a better financial future

For Chaluying from Assam, life is a canvas full of possibilities. This young woman has her mind clearly set on her goals. It's either a profitable business or a good job to sort out her life. And she feels confident that with digital marketing knowledge she will be able to achieve her dream.

Loying, 19 from the Dolaghat district of Assam married Porikhit in September 2020. She stays with her in-laws and takes care of all the household duties. While her in-laws are into farming, the income is meager to sustain their needs.



To share the financial responsibility of her family, Chaluying decided to start weaving Mekhala chaddar.

"Mekhala and other traditional outfits are woven by women in most families of our tribe," says Chaluying. "Even my mother used to weave beautiful Mekhalas and I learned from her," she adds.

The beautiful, bright colors attracted Chaluying so much that she learned to weave her first

Mekhala in Class VI. Since then, it was no looking back for her as she wove clothes for herself and her family.

This skill came in handy to her when she married into the Loying household. "We had a family handloom in the house which we set up and I started weaving the clothes," she says. She innovated with the color and



designs of the fabric. Her in-laws also assisted her and besides farming, the family would make Mekhala together.



But the lockdown of 2020 brought their finances to a halt. The raw material to make the clothes became expensive. "We had to sell our farm produce to make ends meet. And often sold mekhalas for less than its cost," she says.

While a plain mekhela fetches between Rs 1000 to Rs 2,000 the fancier ones go up to Rs 5000. With the scarcity of raw material, the family would manage to sell only one or two garments per month.

She was selected for the Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Program (TEDP) organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and the National Industry Body, ASSOCHAM. Under this program, she is trained to enhance her skill sets and use digital marketing tools to amplify her business.



She believes that this program is a ray of hope for her family. The workshop aims to arm the tribal artisans with the knowledge to market their products online and would help them achieve financial freedom.

"I participated in the workshop and learned how to use social media to our advantage," she says. "We created our Facebook business page and many participants uploaded pictures of their products. Some were lucky to even receive bulk orders," she adds.

Since Chalu does not have any mekhela ready, she has not updated anything on her FB page. "Once the weaves are ready, I will post them and wait for the orders," she says. Chalu hopes to be lucky like her fellow participants and win orders.