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U.K.B. Uddhab Bharali's Grassroot Innovations finding worldwide takers

From a very humble beginning in 1992, Uddhab Bharali's UKB Agrotech, a house-machine design and research firm, has till date to its credit 81 sought after innovations, and targeting to cross more than a hundred by the beginning of next year.



A 'Shristi Samman -Master Innovator' award winner and a technical expert for National Innovation Foundation (NIF), Ahmedabad, Bharali, is regarded as a role model in his field, who has been solicited by the Indian Army in the North East region to develop, some way to minimize excessive labour in some of their daily work.

Bharali regarded his innovations as 'the science of the people, by the people and for the people', attributes the popularity of his innovations to their designs that make more production possible with less consumption of power. He started his machine designing-cum-training firm in the flood-ravaged Lakhimpur district in Assam, on his own, borrowing the initial amount from a private moneylender before spending some hopeless years running after those in the corridors of power seeking in support.

A 1988 batch Mechanical Engineer of the Institute of Engineers (India), Bharali had a very humble beginning, developing his first machine - in the form of a Polyethylene sleeve maker unit for tea industry. His nearest competitor quoted a price of INR 4,29,000 while Uddhab fabricated the same machine at a cost of INR 67000/- and this was the beginning of his innovative career. His other path breaking innovation, the modern Dheki, as he calls is the re-designed Assamese paddy grinder, can be operated by only turning a wheel.



The Vision of India

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Swraj Paul is Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords

Leading NRI entrepreneur Lord Swraj Paul has scripted history by becoming the first Asian deputy speaker of the British House of Lords.

Table with 3 columns: WEATHER, Max°C, Min°C. Rows for Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi.

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Till 2001, when Bharali developed the green Arecanut-Peeling machine to a challenge of developing the machine thrown by Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN), the North East branch of the National Innovation Foundation, to secure their support, the green Arecanut peeler was thought to be impossible by the innovators worldwide. It took mere 20 days for Bharali to design the machine which was later marketed in even countries like Singapore and Chile.

Likewise his landmark Cassava-peeling machine came out in early 2002, which gained tremendous demand in famine-prone areas of South Africa and Central American countries as cassava flour is considered to be a highly nutritious food. With NIF's support, Bharali started developing a series of machines including the 'Paddy Thrasher', the 'Stevia Pulveriser', the 'Garlic-peeling Machine', etc. He has invented a device for NEDFi that can mechanise bamboo splitting for weaving tarza walls, besides handling several assignments from International Fund for Agricultural Development from his workshop in the sleepy town in the easternmost corner of the country.

The iconic invention 'Electric Pomegranate De-seeder' for which he received a mention in MIT Journal in 2006 was interestingly devised after Bharali kicked a pomegranate across the floor in frustration and seeing the seeds fall right out. The sleek, silver gadget that does not even require water to operate, is the first in the world to extract pomegranate seeds without crushing the casing - according to Bharali -can process 18 pounds of pomegranates in five minutes!

"After I made that first machine, I knew I could do anything," said 43-year-old Bharali, who is busy concentrating on his assignments, for which orders have poured in from as far away places like Ethiopia, Kenya, UK and South Africa.

Meanwhile, he had successfully started working on a revenue and subsidy model, whereby empowering the youth and the senior citizens of the region to encourage scientific skill development and innovations as one of the principal avenues of livelihood generation and value creation.

Without a marketing budget, and relying on mouth publicity, he selects around eight youths per batch

irrespective of their academic qualifications and trains them for a period of three months on various machine technologies. In addition to free food and lodging he also pays a stipend of INR 300 per month to meet their pocket expenses, on a pre-condition that each trainee has to be able to draw at least INR 800/- as salary per month from him to be qualified as a skilled workman.

Uddhab's dream is to set up an unconventional orphanage in his hometown which is going to produce technical experts and to develop an industrial village which will have a multi specialty skill development centre as well as a common facility where each person can bring in raw material and get the intermediate product as per requirement. **(BJ)**

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