

## Learning *Lijjat*...



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### Introduction:

**Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad, (SMGULP)** popularly known as **Lijjat**, is an Indian women's cooperative involved in manufacturing of various fast moving consumer goods. It symbolizes '**Strength of women**'. Only women can become the members of this institute. The organization's main objective is empowerment of women by providing them employment opportunities. Started in the year 1959 with a seed capital of Rs. 80, Lijjat has an annual turnover of around Rs. 650 crore, with Rs. 29 crore in exports (As of 2010). It provides employment to around 42,000 people. Lijjat is headquartered in Mumbai and has 67 branches and 35 divisions all over India.

Lijjat is primarily a cottage industry, urban by its origin that has spread to the rural areas. It is considered as one of the most remarkable entrepreneurial initiatives by women that are identified with female empowerment in India.

Lijjatpapad started with a need of 7 women, it has become a one of the leading brands of most crispy breads of India. Along with a known and growing brand it is even known for its social service to women. The Lijjatpapad institute is started by women, for the women. It needs no qualification or specific skills for any woman to join the institute. This institute accepts the women employees without any discretion of her religion or caste. Over the years it's proved that the story of LijjatPapad is one of the incredible stories of India. It evolved as a business and along with business it has now even well known for have in a way implied corporate social responsibility by providing employment to the needy women. This article focuses more on how has this papad making business grown big and more so ever how has it helped its women employees to earn and improve their living.

***"A Papad is another name for the Papadum which is a thin flatbread wafer used in Indian cuisine"***

### History:

**LijjatPapad** is a women organization by the **Women**, and for the Women. It commenced operations in 1959, in Girgaum, Mumbai, with 7 lady members, as under:

- Jaswantiben Jamnadas Popat,
- Parvatiben Ramdas Thodani,
- Ujamben Narandas Kundalia,
- Banuben. N. Tanna,
- Laguben Amritlar Gokani,
- Jayaben V. Vithalani,

And one more lady whose name is not known.

These women lived in “**Lohana Niwas**”- a group of 5 buildings in Girgaum. They gathered on the terrace of the buildings for an inconspicuous function of rolling of papads. And they decided to make papads every day. These seven ladies were the pioneers of **Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad**. In the long run this institution was increasing- ever with additional sister members.

Initially the pioneer batch borrowed Rs 80 from ChhaganlalKaramsi Parekh, a member of the Servants of India Society and a highly successful social worker. They took over a loss-making papad making venture by one Laxmidasbhai and bought the necessary ingredients and the basic infrastructure required to manufacture papads. On March 15, 1959, they gathered on the terrace of their building and started with the production of 4 packets of Papad. They started selling the papads to a known merchant in Bhuleshwar, a small neighborhood of Mumbai.

### **Manufacturing process:**

The manufacturing process in Lijjat is a continuous process, classified into three stages, as under:

**1st Stage:** Flour is kneaded into the dough & is pounded in big chunks. The chunks of pounded dough are sent for distribution among the rolling sisters.

**2nd Stage:** The papad rolling sister's strive from their home to production centers to take the pounded dough. They can take as much as may be desired by them. They go back to their home & roll out the papad. The rolled papad are dried in clean, airy, open space, mainly in the bright sunlight

**3rd Stage:** Papad received from sisters are checked for their quality &packed. The papad packets are then sent for marketing. The entire process is very simple & carried out manually without using any complicated machine. The sisters have standardized the entire process.

### **Payment (Vanai):**

Payment, called vanai charge, is made straight away, before fresh dough is given for the day's work. Vanai is Rs. 18/- per kg. So this means that Rs.90 is the minimum paid to each member. Vanai is paid on daily basis when they deliver the rolled papads and clear

the quality tests. The President and the vice-president are paid a fixed amount of vanai. They are not supposed to roll papads as according to the norms only the person who has previously rolled papads can become the vice-president or the president or the president. They are entitled for the vanai only when they attend the office and perform their respective duties.

### **Branch management:**

Every branch is headed by a **Sanchalika** (branch head) who is chosen from among the sister-members by consensus. Similarly, allotment of different works like dough-making, distribution of dough, weighing and collection of papad, packaging, etc. are all decided by the sister-members by consensus. The wage pattern is such that the same amount of work fetches almost the same wages. In any case, it is the collective responsibility of the sister-members to manage all branch activities efficiently and profitably. Apart from production, the branch is also responsible for marketing its products in the area allotted to it. The wide network of dealers and the goodwill that Lijjat products enjoy with customers make the marketing relatively easy. To maintain the high quality and standard of Lijjat products and uniformity in taste for the same product from different branches, the central office supplies the raw material – moong and urad flour -- to all its branches. This remains the only involvement of the central office in the entire production and marketing exercise of the branch office.

### **LijjatPatrika:**

LijjatPatrika, the in-house magazine, is published and circulated for a nominal rate to those interested in the activities of ShriMahilaGrihaUdyog. It is published in as many as four languages, namely English, Gujarati, Marathi, and Hindi. LijjatPatrika has emerged as a strong mode of communication for information related to significant events and initiative at Lijjat.

### **The Breakthrough Point:**

The turning point of this institution came in the year 1966 when the institution was recognized by the **Khadi** and village industries commission. It was registered under the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950 and also registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Besides papad, the institute produces many other products like *masalas*, *khakaras*, *vadi*, **Sasadetergentpowder** & *cakes*, *bakery products*, *liquid soaps*, *gehuatta&chapattis*. At present it has 69 centers and 31 divisions in different states and provides self-employment to about 42000 sister members all over India. The sales in the 1<sup>st</sup> year amounted to over Rs 6,196/- that means in 1959 it reached to Rs 315 crores, which includes Rs 12 crores of exports. Around 30 – 35 % of LijjatPapad production has been exported to many countries such as the U.K, the U.S.A, and the Middle East and also in Southeast Asia and Europe.

The organization believes that business has to be done with prudence and thereby the following three principals have evolved:

### **The Business Concept**

The SMGULP is run on sound commercial principles. The main aim of the organization is to provide self-employment opportunities to women. As most of the women working, come from the disadvantaged sections of society, the organization seeks to inculcate feelings of self-confidence and self-reliance in them. The member sisters share the profits among themselves in a judicious manner.

### **The Family Concept**

SMGULP works like a big family. It tries to create a sense of family among employees. All the affairs of the institution are handled like a family carrying out its own daily household chores.

### **The Devotion Concept**

For women working in SMGULP, it is a source of strength; a place of worship where they work for the benefit of all. The organization is for people who have faith and trust in its policies and basic concepts and who regard work as worship. Each branch usually operates from 5.00 am to 10.30 am.

### **Role in Women Empowerment:**

The growth of the Lijjat is often seen in the larger canvas of women and their empowerment. The organization has undertaken various efforts to promote literacy and computer education for member-sisters and their families. A literacy campaign for sisters began through literacy classes at Girgaum on June 18, 1999. Later, the managing committee decided to start such classes in all its branches. From 1980 onwards, Lijjat started giving **ChhaganbapaSmruti** Scholarships to the daughters of the member-sisters.

The member-sisters used their organization as a medium to promote their families' welfare. In the Valod Centre, they set up an educational and hobby center for rural women. Orientation courses in typing, cooking, sewing, knitting and toy making as well as other courses like child welfare, first aid and hygiene were taught. The first ever **pucca** (tarred) road in Valod to be built and inaugurated in 1979 was with the help of the Lijjat Center, Valod branch.

In 1979, Lijjat teamed up with **UNICEF** to organize a seminar in Mumbai on "**Child Care and Mother Welfare**", as a part of the International Year of the Child celebrations.

In October 1984, Ms. Bhadraben Bhatt represented Lijjat at the **UNESCO** sponsored international workshop on "**The role of women in the assimilation and spread of**

**technological innovation”** held at NITIE, Powai. Ms. AlkabenKalia represented Lijjat at the national level meeting on women convened by the **National Commission on Self Employed Women**.

At the behest of **Mother Teresa**, the member-sisters also took part in some activities of the **Asha Dhan**, an institution to care for destitute women.

On several occasions, the Lijjat member-sisters have undertaken social service activities such as distributing nutritious food for poor children, donating money for conducting community marriage, instituting prize-money for spread of primary education, undertaking blood donation drive, organizing health camps, plantation drives and even making donations to Government bodies. In 1999, the Mumbai City felicitated Smt. **Rukminiben Pawar**, the then **Lijjat President**, for her contribution in the field of social work.

### **Conclusion:**

The **Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad** evolved as a *papad* making business, but it has contributed immensely to the field of women empowerment. The institution paves the way for women to become self-reliant and self-confident. In the process, Lijjat provides them the platform for improving their status in the society, which is their justified right.

The **Sarvodaya** philosophy proved vital in forming Lijjat’s foundation. Lijjat has emerged as an innovative organization in which women from any religion, caste, or class can become members. Transparency in operations and a nonhierarchical structure has helped in establishing organizational accountability among member sisters.

The essential message that Lijjat’s success conveys has definitely fired the imagination of women and rural folks. The Lijjat branch management pattern is based on an equal profit and loss sharing principle and the business story of Lijjat, itself proves the righteous of the concepts it follows.

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