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Powered by women

Nita Sathyendran



levelling the playing ground(From top) Members of Padinjarethara Kudumbashree unit in Wayanad and Nadathara unit in Thrissur on the set of Ini Njangal Parayam in Thiruvananthapuram Photos: Nita Sathyendran

Women power is on a roll with Doordarshan's new reality show for Kudumbashree units, Ini Njangal Parayam

Jessy Job opened a new chapter in her life when she was six months pregnant with her first child. For starters, she dumped her alcoholic husband and decided to live life on her own terms. "I come from a family of agriculturalists and started cultivating my one-acre plot for survival. Gradually, I took the lead to cultivate the indigenous Karupakara variety of bitter gourd on 12-and- a-half acres of leased land, along with a bunch of other women. Last year I earned Rs. 3.5 lakh from the harvest alone, most of which we export. Over the years, from the proceeds of my farming activities, I have built an 800 sq feet house, bought a car and a scooter too," she says, with pride.

A member of Kudumbashree's Nadathara unit in Thrissur, Jessy's is one of the many success stories that audiences will get to see in Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvananthapuram's new social reality show *Ini Njangal Parayam*.

Set to premiere on March 8, International Women's Day, it showcases the stories of economically-disadvantaged women entrepreneurs, who are part of the Kudumbashree Mission in the state.

In the same line as the channel's much-acclaimed social reality show for panchayats, *Green Kerala Express*, this new show 'envisages to select the best ideas and innovative and locally relevant development interventions' carried out at the grassroots level by Community Development Societies (CDS) that function within the Kudumbashree Mission.

"If *Green Kerala Express* was about good governance, *Ini Njangal Parayam* is about people; ordinary folk who are individually and collectively making a difference to society. More than the economics, the show focusses on the stories of these women, a majority of whom come from economically disadvantaged families – how they have opened a social space in their villages, how they have risen above challenges to gain fiscal independence and become empowered," says G. Sajan, deputy director and programme head, Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvanthapuram. He is spearheading the

reality show along with K.B. Valsala Kumari, executive director, Kudumbashree.

Drop by DD's studio complex at Kudappanakunnu, where the first schedule of the shoot is in progress and you'll understand the strides that these plucky women have taken in the few years that the project has been up and running. Their tales of entrepreneurial success and empowerment are at once inspiring as they are enviable. From micro-credit enterprises and vegetable, rice, dairy and poultry farming to teaching karate and driving, making handicrafts, soap manufacturing, running old age homes and serving up scrumptious eats, there's nothing that these women can't do, it seems. And all of it is being captured on camera.

Set for the contest

Of the 1,072 CDS in the state, after an initial scrutiny by an expert committee, only 70 of the top ones, both from urban and rural areas, five from each district, made the cut for the contest. A typical 40-minute episode of *Ini Njangal Parayam* starts with a short video of the innovative interventions of a particular CDS. The five-member jury panel, comprising three paramagnet members, one expert and one celebrity will then engage the representatives of each CDS in a question answer session. At the end of the episode, each CDS will then be scored based on various factors such as their contribution to women's empowerment, sustainability, longevity, replicability and feasibility of their projects, impact on poverty alleviation, innovativeness, participation and social inclusion and so on.

"The top 15 CDS will be shortlisted for the semi-final round. Jury members will visit each shortlisted CDS and whittle the list down to five for the final round. In addition, 10 of the best individual projects, under various development categories will also be shortlisted for the best idea round," explains Sajan.

Launched in 1998, Kudumbashree is a community-based poverty alleviation programme that was conceived as a joint project of the Government of Kerala and NABARD. The grassroots of Kudumbashree are Neighbourhood Groups (NHG) that send representatives to the ward level Area Development Societies (ADS). The ADS in turn sends its representatives to the Community Development Society (CDS), which completes the unique three-tier structure of Kudumbashree. Today, Kudumbashree is a network of over 40 lakh women, with 2.58 lakhs NHGs, over 19,700 ADSs and 1072 CDSs.

Source: www.kudumbashree.org

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