

# Bolpur man on mission to help the poor

## Chowdhury Sacrificed His Job Abroad And Joined An Indigenous Conglomerate Near Home

Someswar Boral & Krishnendu Bandyopadhyay | TNN

**Bolpur/Kolkata:** It was difficult for Nitu Das of Bolpur's Ghatoalpara to make both ends meet until she came across a messiah in Deb Prasanna Chowdhury. Nitu, the wife of a mason, now works at the village sewing school to supplement the family income.

"Both my daughters are now able to get free coaching at the study centre run by Prasanna sir," said a visibly happy Nitu. She is not the lone example. Chowdhury has proved to be a messiah to several others in Panchsoa and its neighbouring villages.

Chowdhury's philanthropic activities, aimed at benefiting underprivileged children and women, involve a healthcare centre, a school, a vocational training institute and other project activities and are part of umbrella organisation Deb Kalika Chowdhury Charity and Development Centre – named after his late father Deb Kalika Chowdhury.

As many as 300 children are taught by efficient teachers at the coaching centre, while 1200 patients are treated free of cost in the health centre every month. Also, about 100 youths are trained in computer skills and around 60 women are taught needle work at this centre. "My mission is to provide free health care, education, training and other income generation opportunities to as many people as possible. We also sensitise people on environmental care," said Deb Chowdhury.

"I cannot forget the poverty that I have seen in my childhood. My father has been my inspiration. Born amid poverty, he went on to become an economic advisor to the Emir of Kuwait," said Chowdhury.

His is not the conventional 'rags-to riches' story. Chowdhury,



Deb Prasanna Chowdhury takes a class at the centre. About 300 children are taught here

who has five postgraduate degrees to his credit, gave up his well-paying job abroad to attend to his heart's calling. In 2000, he joined an indigenous conglomerate so that he could return to Bolpur more often. He has dedicated his life for the uplift of the downtrodden at his native village. Chowdhury's overpowering passion has even led him to live apart from his family — his wife, a gynaecologist in Dubai and daughter who is a student there.

Chowdhury nurtures a much higher vision for the people of his village. "Being successful in life is not the end. It is the beginning

when one should think of contributing to the society. I want each an every person, who is being trained here, to benefit the society in some way and add meaning to his life," he said. His passion and ideals are infectious. Ranjan Das, a small boy in his school, dreams of becoming another Chowdhury once he grows up.

"We never approached the government or some other organization for financial help," said Chowdhury. Apart from exhausting his savings worth crores, he himself arranges for Rs 30 lakh every year for running the trust. His 86-year-old mother is a constant support who actively supervises each and every activity at the vocational training centre for women. The centre has been named Purnima after her.

Chowdhury has lived in the USA, UK, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia but he could never forget his roots. "When I was away, I came straight to Bolpur during the vacation. Now that I stay in Hyderabad, I can visit home more frequently," he said.

The philanthropist — who has a degree in mechanical engineering, an MBA and an LLB degree and two doctorate degrees from foreign universities — has also authored a book called 'Strategic Planning and Management in Non-profit Organisation.' He is currently pursuing his third doctorate from California University.

"Often my corporate friends advise me to focus on my career and personal growth. But I think I can do all these without compromising my job. Rather, I think this charitable work has taught me a lot beyond my university degrees. Now I am 54 and by the time I am 70, I would like to build a cancer hospital at Bolpur where modern facilities will be made available free of cost. At the end of it all I hope to grow into a spiritual person," sighed Chowdhury.