

# Engineering Rajapur Since 1998



**B**right blue walls frame a small doorway that leads to a dimly lit interior. Inside, one can make out the silhouette of Santosh Vishwakarma, surrounded by spare parts and tyres for bicycles and motorbikes. In Rajapur village, Santosh Vishwakarma is the smiling proprietor of a busy vehicle repair enterprise he set up in 1998.

Santosh describes the stark difference between his childhood and the life his three children now have with a sense of pride - "When I was in school, I did not have enough to have two square meals or even buy toys. But my three children go to school and have comfortable lives now, which would not have been possible if not for my enterprise."

After school, Santosh tried various jobs but did not continue with any for longer than five days. He believed in being his own boss, maybe because he had seen his father do the same. He shares the story, "Back in 1998, our village did not have a service centre for bicycles - which was the primary mode of transport. I invested the money I had earned from my scholarship in an air pump and started from my parent's backyard. My true passion was working with metal and fixing cycles." Over a span of twenty years, Santosh added more equipment, shifted his enterprise to a more central location, gained business acumen, and built a strong customer base within a ten-kilometer radius of his enterprise. However, his ambition to service bikes and cars remained a distant dream, owing to limited access to monetary resources. In June 2017, Santosh participated in the 'Kaun Banega Business Leader' ('Who will become a business leader') competition, during which he shared his vision of expanding his enterprise to service more vehicles. Santosh continued participating in various community meetings and attended a business development training programme, in which he defined a step-by-step plan for the growth of his enterprise. He identified the need for credit - in order to invest in better equipment for making his services more efficient- as the first step and received a loan at a fair interest rate from a credit facility soon after. Santosh expanded his enterprise in October 2017 by adding better equipment, which boosted his sales by a factor of four. He proudly claims, "I was earning one hundred rupees per day, and now that figure has risen to four hundred rupees per day." Santosh increased his daily sales without coming under the burden of a huge loan and repaid it to the credit facility in equated monthly installments over the course of six months.

Since then, Santosh has been taking the next steps to expand his enterprise. In February 2019, he added a welding and metal works unit by investing his savings from the past eighteen months. This diversification and augmentation of services have increased his customer base two-fold. His work ethic is simple: "Whoever comes to my enterprise with work will have that work done. I take whatever comes my way." Santosh's skillset is impressive - he is self-taught, driven by hard work, and love for his work. With a new outlook for his enterprise and the capacity to buy new machinery, Santosh plans to keep expanding it further, so his children can run it once they are old enough. Make sure to drop in at Santosh's to get your vehicle checked if you ever cross Rajapur village (and don't forget to say hello to his parrot, Dubbu).