

145 Saddapalli Digava Thanda, 030 Shanthamma, Biogas ID 2256



“I started to dream of bigger things only after biogas came to my house,” says Shanthamma. “It’s been a long journey. I never went to school so I would spend time in the woods collecting firewood even as a child.”

From earning about Rs 10 for three bundles of firewood every day, Shanthamma has surely come a long way. She saved enough to buy four acres of land, and four sheep (via the Coolie Credit Fund) that in time grew to a large herd of 80-90 sheep. She owns three cows, which provide enough milk for consumption at home and for sale.

“I was able to save enough to arrange a nice wedding for my daughter and gift her gold.” She also funded a degree education for her daughter, who now lives in Mumbai with her husband. Her son has completed his graduation and works in Bangalore.

She says, “Under the DLDP (Dry Land Development Programme), I levelled the land I had acquired. I grow groundnut, ragi and millets there now. I earn about Rs 1 lakh a year from the sale of sheep, from rolling and selling tobacco, along with the milk from our cows.”



Change came into Shanthamma’s life when she joined the sangha. “I joined as a Village Health Worker and soon became a Committee Member. So when I got to know about biogas, I immediately



contacted the Coolie Sangha. Within a year or two, biogas came to my home,” she says. Her neighbours were initially against the idea but her mind was made up. “I dug the pit for the biogas myself, with my husband’s help!” she says.

Getting biogas at home was Shanthamma’s first major achievement. Her confidence

grew, and with it, her desire to work for the community. “Getting biogas at home was one of the best decisions I have made. Not only has it improved the quality of our life, but it has also helped me get closer to people and their needs,” she says.

Shanthamma works closely with the Gram Panchayat, keeping a watchful eye on its activities and is the first to raise her voice if there’s any irregularity. “There was no road in the village. I spoke to the MLA and got it sanctioned,” she says. She invited the District Collector to her home for a meal and took the opportunity to discuss with him the sanction of borewells, cows, homes and old age pensions for the villagers. She now speaks up at Gram Panchayat meetings, goes to the Taluk office on village business, and even won a case in court on behalf of her parents against a landlord who had encroached on their land.



Shanthamma is famous in the Coolie Sangha now. “Everyone calls me a leader,” she says.

One of the biggest benefits she has got is getting a house sanctioned under a Gram



Panchayat scheme. She regrets that after eight years of using biogas at home, she had to demolish the unit as she needed the space to build her new house.

But Shanthamma was resourceful; she negotiated with her neighbour to attach a “Y” notch valve to her outlet pipe and both houses now share the Biogas unit!