



CHANGING THEIR LIVES

By NARENDRA BISHT

AT THE ORAKHAN UNIT of a business process outsourcing firm in Uttarakhand, a group of Pahadi women with red *tilaks* on their foreheads and faded nail paint tap away on computer keyboards as they manage financial accounting and bookkeeping for small and medium businesses in the U.S. Some are involved in coding of legal documents. At another centre in Ramgarh, advice and information on social subjects such as child marriage and foeticide are given to young men and women calling from various states such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand.

With six centres in the state situated on the foothills of the Himalayan range, B2R Technologies is not your typical call centre, and neither are the women who make half of the workforce that numbers over 300. Pahadi women are known as the backbone of the hills. They start their day early and traverse rocky and wooded terrain, come rain or sunshine, to finish household chores such as fetching water, firewood, and fodder.

The women—most aged 22-28—who work at B2R Technologies do all that before it is bright and sunny and then walk long forest trails to get to work, signalling a sea change in attitudes towards learning and exploring new horizons. Most have finished only school and B2R provides them training in computer skills and web research. They earn around ₹10,000 a month. Dhiraj Dolwani, whose love for the hills drove him to set up B2R Technologies, says, “These youngsters may not have the academic qualifications but they have the hunger to change their lives.”

They might not be heading multimillion-dollar conglomerates, or closing big-ticket business deals—the usual yardsticks for measuring success. But by not giving in to circumstances and becoming more than the roles set by social mores, these women, who are shining examples of women’s empowerment, stand tall and strong. As India enters a new decade, they stand as a beacon of hope. *Fortune India* tips its hat to them.



DEEPA BISHT

WORKS IN THE FINANCIAL SERVICES VERTICAL IN B2B'S ORAKHAN VILLAGE CENTRE. SHE SAYS THE JOB HAS GIVEN HER CONFIDENCE. THE 24-YEAR-OLD HELPS WITH DOMESTIC CHORES BEFORE AND AFTER OFFICE HOURS.



DEEPA MER

GIVES WOMEN SKILL TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL TIPS TO PEOPLE WHO CALL B2R'S CENTRE IN JHUTIA VILLAGE FROM JHARKHAND, CHHATTISGARH, MADHYA PRADESH, AND BIHAR. APART FROM KNITTING BEAUTIFUL CRAFT TO HELP ENDS MEET, THE 43-YEAR-OLD DIFFERENTLY ABLED WOMAN IS THE ONLY EARNING MEMBER IN THE FAMILY AND ALSO LOOKS AFTER HER OLD PARENTS.



UMA ARYA

HAS BEEN WORKING WITH THE B2R KAUSANI CENTRE FOR A YEAR AND A HALF. THE 23-YEAR-OLD SAYS HER JOB HAS BEEN A BIG HELP TO HER FAMILY.



TULSI BISHT

HAS BEEN WORKING IN THE E-BOOK PUBLISHING VERTICAL AT THE B2R CENTRE IN LETIBUNGA VILLAGE FOR THE PAST EIGHT YEARS. THE 28-YEAR-OLD SAYS HER EARNINGS HAVE HELPED BUILD A HOME AND EDUCATE HER SIBLINGS. AFTER MARRIAGE, SHE HELPS HER IN-LAWS AS THE ONLY EARNING MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

