



Ms. Protima Deb
Artisan working with CRC Exports, Kolkata, WB

Protima Deb was an uprooted tender plant from East Pakistan to India dating back to 1965. She is an outstanding example for social scientists study report that refugees outshine the original settlers of the land. Refugees face the challenges of lives much more courageously in an alien land than the natives of that place and their success rate is more than the local inhabitants.

Protima came to India as a little girl when a war broke out between Pakistan and India in 1965. Political turmoil of that country made the family apprehensive about staying in Pakistan since they belonged to a minority religious group in a land with Islamic majority. Protima's parents crossed the border of India and Pakistan one night by paying a hefty sum to one agent who was earning in lieu of controlling the corridor between erstwhile East Pakistan and India to enter the latter illegally. Protima's struggle of life started since then. Her parents had harrowing time to manage a big family of 8 members without any regular source of income. This girl was growing under tremendous stress but never lost her hope of survival. She says, "I always knew our good days will come soon. My inner confidence gave me strength to fight back against all odds. I started going to school with the help of a local teacher and studied up to class 5 after which I had to withdraw myself from school. I was looking for an opportunity to work somewhere which could give me some training along with some pocket money. Fortunately I found a book-binding workshop where I was gaining experience along with some small sum of money as my pocket money."

Disaster struck the family once again when Protima's both parents died on the same day and all six young siblings were all of a sudden orphaned. By that time she reached her marriageable age but there was none who would take the initiative to find a proper match for her at that hour her positive bend of mind prompted her to take the reins of life in her own hands. She decided to be economically self-sufficient which would give her dignity, self honour and peace of mind. She knew **Allied Craft's (a leather group of CRC)** owner by face as they were living in the same neighbourhood. Mustering the courage she met Mr Tarun Paul who wasn't very keen to take a young woman for his workshop where only men were working. However Mr. Tarun Paul had to surrender before the strong will and determination of Protima who had no inhibitions to work among male artisans though she sometimes had to hear derogatory comments in her neighbourhood for working among men. Her journey of life started flowing in a new direction from that day.

Protima is happy today as she doesn't have to depend on anyone for her living. She stays in her own home which she had built with soft loan from ACP. She maintains healthy rapport with all her brothers and sisters and enjoys high respect from them. **Protima says, "Had I not chosen this path of becoming economically self sufficient, I might have suffered much more pain than what I had suffered in the past. I love my nephews and nieces and bear their educational expenses and they are today very close to me .. I feel happy to see that they are attending school which I couldn't and my dreams of life are going to be fulfilled through them. For all these I owe my gratitude to Allied Crafts Products and more towards CRC Exports Pvt Ltd without whose long partnership with ACP, economic security for destitute woman like me wouldn't have been possible".**