

Economics of a *khova* maker at Chikhaldara

Namdev Hirji Ayeole runs a small provision store in the picturesque and pristine ranges of the Satpura hills of Chikhaldara, about 100 km north of district headquarter Amravati. His shop is famous for his pure '*khova*' not only in his village *Motha* but also in nearby villages. He sells about 150 kg of *khova* per week which goes up to 200 kg during festivals and marriage seasons. The sale price goes as high as ₹ 250/kg during festival season and varies between ₹ 160-200/kg at other times depending upon the demand and availability of quality milk.

Most of the *khova* is sold to sweetmeat shops with which he has yearly contract arrangements while the shop has off-take of about 5-10 kg per day depending upon the footfall. He informs us that a litre of good quality milk yields about 250 gms of *khova*. He prepares *khova* with the help of his younger brother in the traditional way of boiling milk on firewood which is collected from nearby jungles. It is prepared in batches of 8-10 litres of milk which takes about 5 hours of intensive stirring and supervision. Few years back, *Namdev* had purchased a diesel run automated *khova* maker. It had made the job very easy and the consistency of the *khova* also used to be much better. Since, diesel prices shot up considerably, it became unfeasible to continue using the machine and eventually forced him to switch back to the traditional ways.



Khova-making: the traditional way

He rears 5 buffalos himself which collectively produce about 20 litres of the milk and the rest of his requirement is met from milk producers of nearby villages. In a week, he uses about 1000 litres of milk, of which 200 litres is his own for *khova* making. He buys milk at ₹40-45 per litre depending upon the quality. His only investment is time and labour as there is almost negligible cost towards rearing animals and firewood. The only cost he incurs about ₹ 1,000 a week towards transportation of *khova* to the sweetmeat shops in

the city.

While he makes a profit of about ₹ 50-70 a kg during peak seasons, it is ₹ 30-40 per kg in non-seasons it is. On an average he makes about ₹ 4,000-5,000 a week by selling *khova* depending upon the season. The income from *khova* making contributes more than half of his total income with contribution from agriculture and shop. *Namdev* wishes to expand his *khova* business if he has more helping hands and of course reduction in diesel prices is other important thing on his wish-list which will help in supporting his joint-family of 6 and a good education for his children. He believes that there is an ever increasing demand and an assured market for *khova*.