

Triumph of sheer grit and hard work

KERALA-BORN YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR MUSTAFA IS EXPANDING HIS COMPANY BY BRINGING INDIAN CUISINE TO THE MIDDLE EAST

KOLKATA

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It is a proverbial rags to riches story. A story of a boy born in abject poverty, turning into an entrepreneur by sheer hard work and determination, as he sold the basic ingredients of South Indian cuisine – idli, dosa batter.

Meet P.C. Mustafa, born in a village in Kerala, Chennalode near Kalpatta in Wayanad, whose father worked in a coffee plantation. His mother never went to school.

However, through years of hard work and determination, he has turned his company along with his cousins into billion rupees venture.

"We became an Rs1 billion [Dh54.28 million] company in October 2015," says Mustafa with a wide smile on his face. "Presently, our revenue is close to Rs1.2 billion and we are growing. We have grown from producing 10 packets of idli dosa batter a day in 2005, with just my cousin managing the kitchen, to 50,000 packets a day with 1,100 employees in 10 years."

Failed Class 6

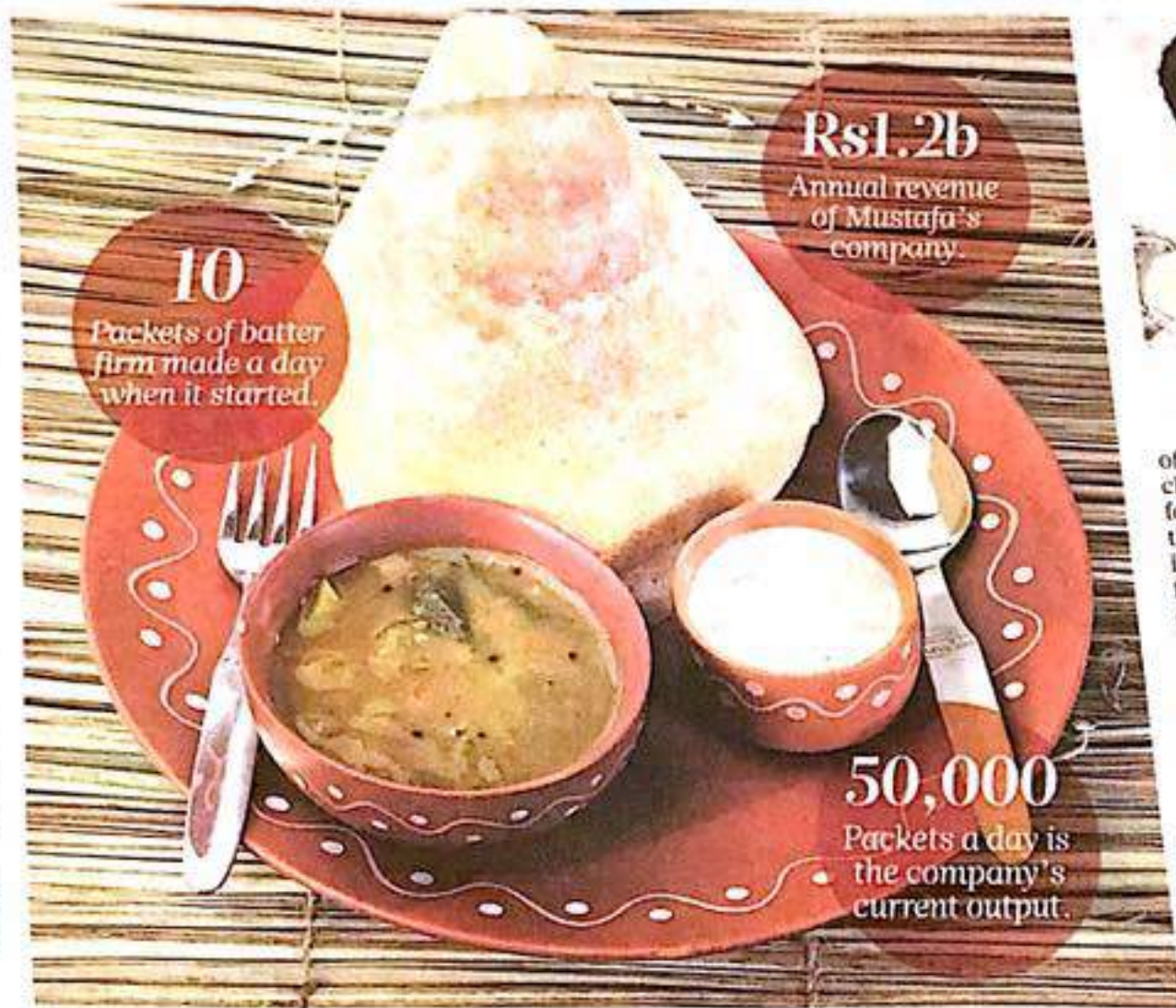
It was a journey like no other, where he had failed in Class 6 and was willing to give up studies and preferred helping his father, as a daily wage worker, instead of studying.

"After I failed in Class 6, I lost interest in studies and wanted to work like my father. However, my teacher Mathew sir asked by father to give me another chance."

"I was weak in English and Hindi but good in mathematics and with sir's help I stood first in class 10. Then I had only one ambition, to become a teacher like Mathew sir, who was my

idol," the entrepreneur said.

For his junior college he went to Kozhikode and though his family was supportive, his father did not have the money to support him. "I was one



P.C. Mustafa

of the students, who was on charity and was offered free food and accommodation by the college. It was a humiliating experience as others made fun of us. But that helped my determination grow."

Later, he did his engineering from National Institute of Technology and much later secured a degree in Management studies from Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore. "I was a hard worker, but I was also lucky. Allah, the almighty was my guiding light," said Mustafa, who prays five-times a day.

The entrepreneur in him came much later while working in Dubai for a bank when he decided to come back to India and spend more time with his parents and most importantly do something to give back to society. "I wanted to do something but never knew what to do and where to

start. One of my cousins had seen dosa batter being sold in plastic bags tied with a rubber band in nearby stores and suggested we make and supply dosa batter. That was the eureka moment. I decided to invest Rs25,000 and start a company immediately," said the CEO of ID fresh.

Five of us cousins – Nasser, Shamsu, Jaffer, Naushad and me – decided to join hands and started from a shed of around 550 square feet with two grinders, a mixer and a sealing machine.

Middle East expansion

Today, apart from 50,000kg batter, the company sells 40,000 chapatis, 200,000 parathas and 2,000 packets of tomato and coriander chutney in a day. "It is a daily requirement for millions, but preparing it at home is not only time consuming, but also a hassle in modern life," said Mustafa, who is now expanding into other Middle East cities.

"Dubai has been a lucky charm for me. There is huge demand and the credit goes to our partner Asif. We have launched in Abu Dhabi and will soon be in other cities like Muscat, Manama," he added.

It has been a long journey for Mustafa, from a boy in remote village to that of an entrepreneur. "It has been tough journey, but it has also been the most rewarding and satisfying."