

# When going gets tough, tough gets going

Losing one's husband in the prime of life is devastating. But Urmila Jog and Ish Mohini Puri buried their sorrow to create a new future

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**DNA**  
**SPECIAL**

**Profile of Urmila Jog:** "During a war, army men are heroes. Later people forget them," says Urmila Jog, whose husband, Col Hari Krishna Jog, was killed while on duty 30 years ago.

"My life changed in a second... I realised life is momentary. I stopped planning for the future," says Urmila. Nonetheless, she decided to face life with courage and determination.

Although her father insisted she settle down in Pune with her two sons, Urmila came to Mumbai in 1976. She got a flat from a relative and set up a home with her two sons. Soon, she responded to a newspaper ad and applied for a gas agency. "I didn't know a thing about running a business. Before this I had worked for a tie maker, but that is all the work experience I had," she says.

She got the gas agency in 1977 and started with a workforce of 15. Today



Urmila Jog (left) with Ish Mohini Puri

she employs about twice that number and has expanded her business to cover areas like Mahim, Matunga, Dadar and Prabhadevi.

Managing the business wasn't easy. "I used to be timid. But I had no choice other than learning the tricks of the new trade. Handling people was the toughest challenge. My father was a freedom fighter and my husband was a soldier. So, I was used to a disciplined life. And, now I was amid these men who did not have any work ethic or discipline. I began by grooming them; I taught them to dress, to behave and to be punctual.

It paid off. With a customer base of 9,000, Urmila's turnover is in lakhs. Urmila declined proposals for remarriage. "I wanted my sons to pursue any field of their choice. One is now a CA, the other is an engineer from IIT. In their happiness, I have found mine."

**Profile of Ish Mohini Puri:** Ish Mohini Puri had just touched 40 when her husband, Col Sarvjit Puri, was killed in action. "Ours was a happy

family of four. Suddenly, everything changed," says Ish, who was in Assam at the time.

Ish settled in Delhi with her children. "It was a tough period. They were adolescents and needed their father for guidance. Besides, we started staying in a small house in Janakpuri. This was a come-down for us as we were used to Army bungalows with helping hands all around."

Few years later, her children left home for studies. Ish was now very lonely. Ish took up a job as an administrator in an army school for some time, but soon quit. Instead, she took up something, she says, she had never imagined in her "wildest dreams" to do: farming.

"It was 1977. We had a 17-acre farm 200 km away from Delhi. My mother-in-law asked me to manage it," Ish says. "She made it clear that nobody else was there to take care of the farm and that I would have to do it all by myself. Of course, she supported me at every stage."

But adjusting to life in village was difficult. "In the village, people were orthodox. But I stood up to all the challenges." Her farm produced wheat, vegetables, mangoes and even roses.

Ish worked with the men herself, tilling the land, using the tractors, sowing and harvesting. She also diversified her enterprise by giving the land on rent to other farmers.

However, Ish had to ultimately sell the farm. So after 18 years, Ish sold her farm. It fetched her very good price. "That was when she bought a flat in Gurgaon and settled there."