

Fighting Against the Odds: Usha's Journey from a P.E. Teacher to a Handicrafts Entrepreneur



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Ever since the young age, Usha has determinedly paved her way through life. Giving up her education after Grade 12, she entered married life, deterred from her original course yet undaunted by life's dilemmas. She re-enrolled in school three years later to pursue her passion for Physical Education. Usha strived and sacrificed to realise her dream- separating from her child to complete her education in Bhopal. Her unrelenting will and enthusiasm helped her in securing a job as a P.E. teacher at a private school. She was ecstatic. However, life has a stealthy habit of springing the most unassuming things upon you. Usha lost her job amid government change and political upheaval, finding herself desolate and without a source of income.

Refusing to bend in the face of adversity, Usha remained stubborn to make a name for herself. She worked odd jobs and simultaneously explored different ventures that piqued her interest. It was at this juncture in her life that she chanced upon an opportunity to learn handcrafted decor. Usha participated in a macrame training program organised by WE-LEAD (Women Empowerment through Livelihoods, Entrepreneurship and Access through Digitalisation), a project by Development Alternatives, supported by DB Schenker. This project was designed to leverage technology and bridge informational, skill, and resource gaps for creating sustainable economic opportunities through entrepreneurship. Soon she found out that she had a natural flair for handicrafts and directed her efforts to transform this newfound talent into a career.

Gradually, after seeing her unique macrame designs and finesse of work, orders started to pour in. With every new order, Usha discovered a sense of purpose and an innate fulfilment that fuelled her persistence to leave an indelible mark on the lives she touched. Her work became an inspiration to women in her locality. She had unexpectedly yet deliberately surpassed all obstacles in her path to become an ode of encouragement for all the women who felt like the world had conspired against them and still wanted to fight back. A hidden gem from Jahangirpuri, she is now a successful entrepreneur who aims to start an Instagram page to share her work with the rest of the world. Every time someone tells you that you cannot accomplish something, take a deep breath, remember Usha's story, and fight against all odds.