

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

I became a single parent with a one year-old daughter at the age of 28 when my husband died in an accident. It was a particularly difficult period in my life but I eventually accepted and embraced life's realities as they came. I bought a small, cosy home for me and my daughter and raised her independently. My daughter remains my source of strength and I now live with her and her husband in Bengaluru, and enjoy taking care of my grandson.

But it's not about really about 'battling the odds.' The key lesson I have learnt from life is that there is no use complaining or asking, 'Why did this happen to me?' We need to move on as there are so many great experiences to enjoy and you cannot encounter them by shutting yourself away.

I concluded early in life that I had a lot of spunk, which helps when struggling with life's battles. Let me show you what I mean. I have always been interested in sports, in my pre-university days in Ethiraj, during my graduation in Mount Carmel and later when I worked at the Life Insurance Corporation of India. Whether athletics or badminton, I was eager to try my hand at it. Even today, at the age of 68, a brisk 45-minute walk on my terrace gives me much-needed momentum in the mornings.

In the 1960s and 1970s, being a sportswoman wasn't easy. I came from an orthodox family and married into one, and I didn't dare let anyone know about my passion for sports. But I certainly made myself conspicuous by running and doing long jumps in a sari!

It was this same determination that saw me through the daunting challenge of raising a child on my own. Fortunately, we were a circle of 25 families where I lived, and we were very close-knit. With so many helping hands, I managed to bring up my daughter effortlessly, even as a working mother. Financially, it was my choice to stay independent, even as I remained in touch with my own parents and in-laws.

My interest in sports had an influence here as well; during the summer holidays, I used to organise sports meets for children. Those were times when we didn't take children on exotic vacations and a sports club during summer was just what they needed. I also used to run a mobile library for children where they could borrow books every Saturday and got volunteers to take them to sports stadiums to watch professional athletes. Being socially active in my own little community gave me a deep sense of satisfaction.

I suppose the common thread through the years was—you guessed it!— sports. In 2009, I cultivated an interest in the walkathons held annually in Bengaluru. I prefer to walk alone, at my own pace, and my only objective is to enjoy



Prasad Durga

### Sportsmanship and spunk have seen Kumar through life's travails

the walk as I don't view it as a competitive pursuit. It is heartening to notice a significant increase in the number of silvers participating over the last five years. Why, some of them even arrive in groups in buses from across the city!

Another hobby I thoroughly enjoy is writing poetry. I wrote my first poem on my husband's first death anniversary, to put words to my thoughts, and have continued writing since then. I am also an active member of the Poets International Society and have published a few poems in the society's newsletter. Every December, there is an annual convention where poets from across the globe meet and share their works. It is truly an inspiring experience.

I have always retained my sense of humour, remained socially active and bonded with friends and neighbours. This outlook has helped me through my toughest battles. People ask me how I managed to raise a child on my own but I don't think I looked at it that way at all. I simply dealt with it one day at a time in life—just as I take one step at a time on the walkathons

—Rajmani Kumar, Bengaluru