

# No horsing around!

Meet Ameeta Mehra, whose stud farm in Gurgaon has bred seven Indian Derby winners. **Chetna Dua** talks to her about what it takes to be a successful horse-breeder in India



Horse-breeding and trading are largely considered a man's domain because of the power politics and shrewd business

tactics involved. But Ameeta Mehra, the managing director of Usha Stud Farm in Gurgaon, can give any man in the horse business a run for his money. Ameeta has bred seven Indian Derby winners and 122 classic winners in the last 15 years, making Usha the number one stud farm in India (Stud Book Authority of India, 2013-14). Ameeta spoke to *Femina* about her passion for horses and how she manages to run her business in a man's world.

## DESTINY'S CHILD

"I was kind of catapulted into the world of horse trading when my parents (Maj Pradeep and Veena Mehra) died in an air crash in 2001," says Ameeta, about her decision to join the family business. Highly trained in the science of breeding horses from The Irish National Stud and Equine Nutrition from Kentucky in USA, Ameeta was involved in the breeding of horses with her father for 10 years, but the business side

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of buying and selling horses was completely handled by him. "Even though I am a management graduate from IIM Ahmedabad, business did not interest me much," reveals Ameeta, who is a graduate in English literature from Lady Sri Ram College.

## NERVES OF STEEL

At an important horse racing meet in Mumbai a few days after her parent's death, most clients and breeders who met Ameeta assumed that the stud farm would shut down because there was no son in the family to take over. "It was so strange when my

competitors (and even old clients) who came up to me to offer their condolences, remarked, "It is so sad that the farm will no longer be able to reach the heights your father took it to...I suppose you will not continue for too long?" recalls Ameeta, adding that it almost seemed like a condolence message not just for the death of her parents but also the death of the farm. "That got my goat. And I became determined to take over the business and be the best at it." There has been no looking back ever since for this woman who has 200 men working under her to >

