

FIRMLY IN THE SADDLE

Her horse sense has seen her through the ups and downs of the business

Suchitra Kulkarni

Ameeta Mehra decided to formally join her father, Maj. P.K. Mehra's flourishing 'The Usha Stud Farm' in 1991 as 'a sense of duty'.

Armed with a diploma in Equine Management from The Irish National Stud, studies in nutrition from Kentucky in the USA and a diploma in business management from the IIM Ahmedabad, Ameeta had the right qualifications for the strappy job.

However, in spite of these qualifications, her father put her through the daily drill and Ameeta had to start right at the basics. She worked for six months, cleaning stables, grooming horses, and eating in the langar with the other stable hands or syce. "I was so conscientious, I over did it", she ad-

mits. It was only when she hurt her back carrying sacks of feed that her internship ended!

However, she really got to know the people and understood things first hand and got a lot of practical experience.

A 'hands-on manager', Ameeta

• IN NEWS •

AMEETA MEHRA Woman Entrepreneur

ta shifted to the stud farm in Gurgaon ten years ago, at a time when Gurgaon was totally undeveloped.

She now manages a band of 100 brood mares handpicked on the basis of their immaculate pedigrees and racing performances and champion stallions, Razeen and Steinbeck, and their yearlings.

The achievements are there

for all to see. The farm has bred 197 classic winners in 24 years. In the last five years, the Usha Breds have won 23 of the 46 "Top Ten" races. The farm has got an unparalleled record of producing 8 Winners of the Indian Derby, 10 Winners of the Bangalore Derby, 5 successive Winners of the Indian Oaks, 5 Winners of the Poonawalla Breeders Million and has been judged the best stud farm in India.

Depending on the pedigree, performance, horse, etc., the price range for the horses that go on sale at the Usha Stud Farm is between Rs.50,000 and a stupendous Rs 10 lakh. It is the meticulous and individual care, nutritious feeding, grooming and exercise programmes given to the foals that make them future champions. Their stallion Razeen is the



Champion Leading Sire for the year 2000-2001. Razeen's progeny in year 2000-2001 have earned prize money of Rs 3.53 crore.

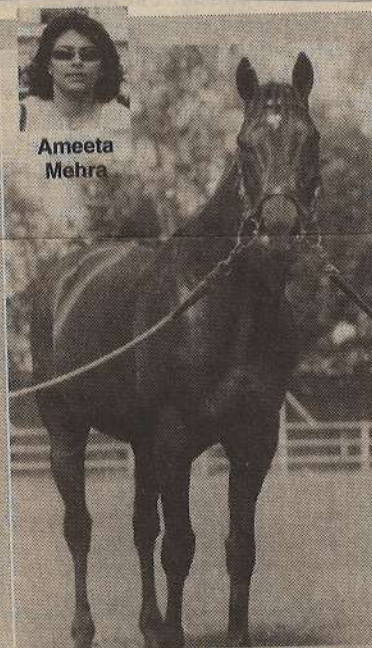
She has carried on valiantly

even after the tragic death of her father, mother and sister in a helicopter crash near Mussoorie in January this year. She says that 'the tradition, culture and continuity that has grown over the years', her 10-year stint and her team of professionals have helped to continue Maj. Mehra's dream forward.

Though race-horses and spiritualism make strange bedfellows, Ameeta is highly spiritual

and intellectually-oriented. "I think the spiritual part is sustaining us all - the farm, me and the people. I don't believe in just the materialistic

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Ameeta Mehra

Champion stallion Razeen

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orientation of life, which means that I pay as much attention to human beings, their needs and nature as well as to development and growth."

It was this strong faith that kept Ameeta going after her personal loss. "I don't think I would have been so strongly 'back in the saddle', as they say. Had it not been for my spiritual faith and strength I think I would have been finished," she adds.

The Gnostic Centre that she started in 1996 is based on the teachings of Sri Aurbindo and The Mother.

Ameeta's workshops on "Power Of Attitude", and "Dynamics of Consciousness in Work" have attracted professionals as well as organisations like Union Bank of India, KLM Cargo, National Academy of Customs Central Excise & Narcotics. A CD prepared by the centre, "A New Education for a New India" has been distributed free to every teachers training school of the government of India.

Along with breeding race-horses, Ameeta is the compiler of four books - 'Dhyana', 'Abhaya', 'Sadhana', and

'Karmayoga', and edits a bi-monthly magazine of the Gnostic Centre.

Ameeta claims to be fairly different from her father; while he developed and nurtured the business, her vision is to bring in ethics and values to the business and a sense of unity among the other breeders in India. Her hands are full with the stud farm and her spiritual and intellectual pursuits. And this young woman finds 'there is no time to marry'. Spirituality need not be otherworldly and in ochre; it can be found on a stud farm wearing jeans.