



# The man who **lost** it all & **won**

## The story of a real-life phoenix, Man Mohan Malik.

**T**he year was 1973. A young man of 20, was thrust amidst a sea of responsibilities at his father's untimely and sudden demise. Man Mohan Malik, an astronomy enthusiast had been firm about not joining his father's business. Now, the implicit expectations of his widowed mother and four sisters left him with little choice. Malik's father had left behind a flourishing enterprise and a respectable wealth. With a hastily acquired confidence, Malik picked up from where he had left off, and expanded the business to multiple ventures from textiles to bullion and even trading at the stock exchange. Within six years, he spent every

penny his father had left behind, drove every venture into the ground and brought his family to bankruptcy.

A broken man, Malik had lost it all. His business, his confidence and also his spirit. He saw no better solution to end his troubles, than to end his life.

It's 2010. We're greeted by a much more optimistic Malik. His face wears a warm smile and he laughs often. "I was a novice then. And the people I trusted the most, my friends and relatives, took advantage of that." He starts his story from the lowest point of his life. Not the slightest hint of self-pity behind that smile which remains intact. "We all must die someday. I thought why not die fighting."

Where most others would have chosen to give up, Malik took another shot. In the quaint town of Paonta Sahib on the foothills of the Himalayas (where he lives till date), he started Himalya Foods, 28 years ago. Today, it is India's largest frozen foods manufacturer and exporter.

"It was a leap in the dark," he admits. Looking for a suitable venture to redeem himself, Malik had chanced upon the idea of mushroom farming while driving past a mushroom farm in the US. It was a labour intensive process and all he knew was that in India, it could be done at a much lower cost. He started, but without thinking it through.

His first batch of exports was rejected. It had been shipped without adequate temperature control and was destroyed by the time it reached port. There was barely a domestic market for his product. And soon, the international market crashed. But this time, Malik wasn't crushed.

"Entrepreneurship is a lot of persistence," he had realised. Familiar with failure, it no

longer disturbed him and he learnt to stay behind his venture and steer it to success.

Branching out, this time more strategically, he spread his risk and began producing baby potatoes and mozzarella cheese on his farms. Aggressively marketing his product abroad, he built a trustworthy brand of frozen foods there. A first for India. And as the Indian consumer evolved, a domestic market soon developed.

But by now, his focus was not just the bottom-line. "Money is important, but not paramount. At the end, you leave it all behind." Malik today, gauges his success by his contribution to the community at large.

Himalya produces pure food without chemicals. Great care is taken to ensure that the farm soil is well utilised without polluting it. And job creation and employee development are major objectives of the organisation. With its latest offering, 1 Daily, Malik has entered into the much underdeveloped market of nutraceuticals, only because he's sure it can positively add to the lives of Indians.

"Indians do not have access to many important nutrients in their diet. And most don't realise the problems their deficiency can create," he argues with apparent concern. But is it this concern for others, which clearly takes his focus away from profit, the reason why so many of his earlier ventures failed?

For the first time, his smile fades as he reflects on that question.

Only to return a moment later, with this reply: "I didn't think like this earlier. I do now. And maybe that's the reason for my success."

Now that's a winning attitude.



**Source :** The Spirit of Entrepreneurship  
Stories of Guts, Grit and Glory  
By The Times of India

