

Achievers, despite the odds

They are the true role models of the society. A great inspiration to even the so called 'normal people' because they have



triumphed despite their severe challenges. Challenges that were not only physical in nature but economical, social and even gender-based. Like **Hephzibah Dorothy** who runs the New Horizon's Centre for the Disabled in Dodda Banaswadi agrees, "I have accepted the fact that I have a physical disability. Despite all my challenges and hurdles, I am proud to be a woman. Everybody has challenges. And this is mine. I shall not let it cow me down but will continue to reach out to my physically challenged sisters till the end of my life."

Not that the men found the going easy. "I was struck with polio when I was two years old. Ever since, I struggled whether it was for my education or employment. I must not forget to thank all those people who stood by me. Today my wheel chair tennis academy trains several physically challenged adults in the sport," says **Mr. Boniface Prabhu** who is the only wheelchair tennis player in the country and has won a lot of medals in the Ford Open and the Australian Open.

So is **Mr. Mahan-tesh** who became blind at



the age of 10 months due to an attack of typhoid. But he has been a cricketer,



a guest lecturer in English literature, set up a cricket team for visually impaired boys and today founded the Samarathanam Trust for the Disabled. Says he, "There are always ups and downs," and quotes from Shelly's verse, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Another lady of grit and determination is the late **Mrs. Vijaya-lakshmi** who was also visually impaired but has to her credit the honour of singing with the likes of S.P.BalaSubramaniam and Yesudas. She had lent her melodious voice in several Kannada films like *Deveeri* and *ShriGandha*. Her demise recently in a car

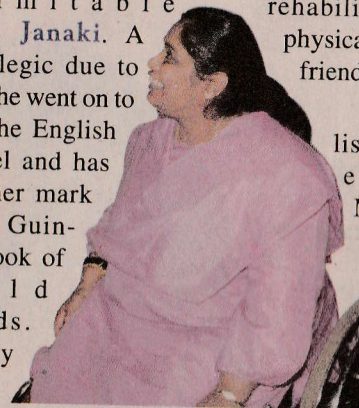
accident is indeed a great loss to the world of music.

Malathi Holla is a lady who inspires people everyday by her optimism. A manager with the Syndicate Bank, she entered national athletics in 1975, inter-



national athletics in 1988 and brought home several golds and silvers. This founder trustee of Mathru Charitable Trust for the Physically Challenged says that her next goal is the Athens Olympics.

Another lady who comes to mind is the **innimitable C. N. Janaki**. A paraplegic due to polio, she went on to swim the English Channel and has made her mark in the Guinness Book of World Records. "My father



and mother are my greatest assets. My mother used to take me to the swimming pool everyday. My father's death has left us shattered," she rues. The mother-daughter duo are presently contemplating about their future.

Given his shy and reserved manner, **B.V. Srinivas's** determination and drive is hard to believe, especially when he returned home with gold from the Belgian Paralympic Championships in Javelin, Discus and Shotput. Says he, "I could never have made it to Brussels without the help of sponsors and friends. I must also thank the Paralympic Committee for the opportunity." Currently he is working at PRO-Vision Asia- an NGO working towards the rehabilitation of his physically challenged friends.

And the list is long and endless. **Ms. Ranjini Ramanujam**, a hearing impaired girl who trains in badminton under Mr.

Ramesh Padukone and **Mrs. Gowroo Somanna** who is also hearing impaired and got the National Award for being the best



woman entrepreneur. **Mr. Ramakrishna** who teaches sign language at the Institute of

Speech and Hearing and **Ms. Madhu Singhal** who is visually impaired and has founded *Mithra Jyothi* - an organisation working specifically for the rehabilitation of Visually impaired girls and **Ms. Vijaya** a lady afflicted with polio who works with the *Sapthami Trust*. They have proved that 'failure may stop us for a while but is destined to lose its fight against persistence'. They have dreamed big for themselves and their country and are today giving back to the society in their own ways. Despite all their odds, these people are indeed Achievers.