



Never-say-die spirit: Vikram Agnihotri, who is the first from India to get a licence for driving with his feet, believes in overcoming the challenges. ■ RAYAN ROZARIO

Vikram — an inspiration to many

Amputated hands don't stop him from pursuing his dreams

DESERT STORM

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Rally driver Vikram Agnihotri has no hands. It does not matter much for him as he believes his feet will do the magic on the wheel on his maiden venture in the Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm 2018 which began here on Monday.

It was not a great day for the 47-year-old from Indore and his co-driver and friend Ankit on the opening day but they termed it a great experience.

The former has come a long way in life and it is all about grit and determination that has seen him driving on the desert, considered to be the most difficult to even the best of drivers.

Incidentally, Vikram is the first from India to get a licence for driving with his feet. He had to run from pillar to post for close to two years and pass several tests before obtaining it last year. He was also instrumental in

the Motor Vehicle Act being amended accordingly.

A post graduate in Economics, Vikram came in contact with a high tension wire while playing at his friend's terrace top. He was only seven then but it turned out to be tragic for him and the family. "My hands were charred and had to be amputated but luckily I survived because I had my feet off the floor. I did not realise what was happening then but my parents motivated me and got me on my feet," he said.

"My parents gave me the impression that nothing had gone wrong and there's more to life," he added.

Vikram went to school like any other child, learnt a bit of football and swimming, and kept himself occupied. But a chance visit to Germany in the 80s changed the course of his life.

"My father was an IPS officer and on a deputation with the foreign ministry. So we had to be in London for two years and another four in Germany. There I met a gentleman called Franz. He

was born without hands but he made small useful gadgets for people with such difficulties."

On his return to India, Vikram drew inspiration from it and decided to make the best use of his feet — in a car. He picked up a Celerio automatic and had a go at it. "I did not go for an expensive one because I wasn't sure if I would get the licence.

"Lots of people laughed at my decision and asked me why drive at 45, but I fought all odds. Today I am a happy man," he said.

Vikram's first race outing was at the Malwa Adventure in Indore.

"An official there gave me an invite and I grabbed it and won the amateur class. The second came my way through Central Motorsports. We lost out by two minutes," he added.

The Desert Storm is his third rally and he believes in facing challenges. "Because life without challenges is going to be boring. I look forward to more of it."