

Make-up not break! Hashtag Lakshmi Mandal

18-year-old Sophia College student runs her own mini make-up start-up; funding her way to an IAS journey

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At a time when 'breaking barriers', 'financial planning' and 'empowerment' have turned from buzzwords to hashtags, there are women building individual success stories for reasons other than Insta reels. Here's a story of an 18-year-old accidental entrepreneur and her mother that will inspire many underprivileged young girls dreaming of a better future.

A first-year student of economics and psychology at Sophia College, **Lakshmi Mandal** doesn't stay back at the college canteen to chill with her friends after hours. She runs back home to complete her make-up orders for her small business. Her journey started with a wish to drive social change through the Indian Administrative Services.

Happy with her family of five, including parents and two siblings at Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Nagar in Cuffe Parade until 2017, she received a jolt when her father passed away in a tragic train accident. Rambalak Mandal was the sole breadwinner in the family who made ends meet by selling clothes on the streets of Churchgate.

The ensuing emotional and financial crisis, led Lakshmi's mother Mundrika to restart her late husband's business. To help her mother and support the education of her siblings, Lakshmi decided to lend a hand.



"As there wasn't much I could do along with my studies, I joined a beauty course through a skill development programme offered by Salaam Bombay Foundation and launched my own mini start-up. It

has been almost a year that I offer beauty treatments in my locality through a door-to-door service," said Lakshmi. Through her part-time work, she wants to fund her education, become a bureaucrat and bring change in the fields of education, healthcare and employment.

Lakshmi's mother said, "Even if luck will not be on her side in her journey, she will still be financially independent with her skill." Meanwhile, Lakshmi is ready to pitch her idea at Dolphin Tanki, an initiative by Salaam Bombay Foundation, to recognise and fund young talents. She aims to impress the panel judges and secure vital funding to expand her business.