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# THE RUNDOWN

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHENNAI RUNNERS

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## THE WIPRO CHENNAI MARATHON

CRUISING AND  
MUSING ON  
THE RACE ROUTE

## BOOK NOOK

TWO RUNNERS,  
TWO WRITERS

## 50 RUNNERS

"I LOVE RUNNING"

## FOREIGN ROADS

TWO EXPATS ON  
RUNNING IN INDIA

## WHAT'S APP

IN THE WORLD  
OF RUNNING

# SOUL CURRY

Mumbai-based freelance architect and an entrepreneur, Parul Sheth allows *Akhila Krishnamurthy* an insight into the idea, the process, and the experience of her book, *The Running Soul*...

**W**hat triggered the idea of the book? Have you been thinking about it for a while?

I have always wanted to write a book — as English has always been a passion. I just never knew what it would be about. Nine months ago, I was training for the Satara half marathon when suddenly one morning, as I was running the hills alone, the entire format of the book flashed in my head. I had run a really good race last year — 2014 — 4:09 for a full marathon. So that race formed the spine of the book. Ten years of my running, five years of training, and a lot of my life experiences have been woven into the story.

*Do you write only about running; did running, in a sense, make you a writer?*

Yes, running made me a writer; the more I ran, the clearer my thoughts became, and the more I wrote. Running lifts the fog from my brain. And usually my writing draws parallels between life and running.

*Did the blog come first? How did that begin?*

When I started running, I started writing. In 2008, I started a blog called Life's Little Lessons about my observations of life and its eccentricities. Come 2009, I started training with Savio D' Souza for the full marathon. Simultaneously,

a running blog, My Running Diary was born. Four years of blogging - on blogger, tumblr, wordpress, that has now evolved into my website called <http://therunningsoul.com/>.

*Was the book your dire need to express and articulate or is it meant to inspire others to take up running?*

With this story, I hope to inspire the non-runner to start running, the half marathoner to dream bigger and realise that even the impossible is possible, and the marathoner to push his own perceived limits and aim for the stars. Every runner or walker can't dream of being an Olympic champion, but she/he can dream of finishing a marathon. All dreams come true if we have the power to pursue them. This is my message.

**“EVERY RUNNER OR WALKER CAN'T DREAM OF BEING AN OLYMPIC CHAMPION, BUT SHE/HE CAN DREAM OF FINISHING A MARATHON. ALL DREAMS COME TRUE IF WE HAVE THE POWER TO PURSUE THEM ”**

*How long was the book in the making? How did you make time for it amidst a rather busy schedule?*

The actual book took about six months of work. The skills of an endurance athlete and that of an author turned out to be the same. I found the need for hard work, dedication and patience. I gathered my blog posts from over the years; they were scattered all over the web space — in blogger, tumblr and wordpress— dispersed across my desktop and my laptop.

I never realised that my dream to write a book will ever materialise into a serious effort! So I started working at it - with a single-minded effort. I stopped everything else and I ran, wrote and worked somewhere in between. I ignored my children along with everything else. And soon, there it was, slowly taking shape. I persuaded some friends and family to read the initial drafts. They were very encouraging and soon I completed the book. After several edits, today, it has taken the shape that it has. Late night writing, lunch time writing... everything has happened for this book.

*What lessons from running have you translated into your own life?* All I wanted to do last year was to do my best — to cross the finish line completely spent. And there



I got my wish! I gave it everything I had, dug to the depths to get to that finish line, and I crossed it, annihilated. It turned out to be the best race I had ever done.

It really wasn't about the time. That was irrelevant. That race taught me to look deep inside myself, and see what the true measure of success really is. It is about giving your absolute best to each and every day. Life rules apply to running and running rules apply to life.

*Do you really believe that running can be a transformative experience? If yes, is that what your book is about?* Yes. Totally! Running was what put

my life back in order after it was turned upside down. This is a story of the triumph of the human spirit in the face of adversity. As I grow as a runner, I grow as a person. It is a story of how I re-built my shattered life, put it together piece-by-piece. Five months after a life-changing event, I started running to mitigate the emotional pain. The journey has been hard but fulfilling.

*In attempting to chronicle a journey - of sorts - are you also drawing parallels to the idea of running in itself being a journey?* Yes; running is a journey in itself. As they say, you need to enjoy the training which goes on for a few months as the race is only about

a few hours. So you need to enjoy the ride rather than focus on the destination.

*Do you think the book will particularly appeal to women runners?*

I didn't think only of women runners; I wrote it to tell my story — that if I can run a full marathon, anyone can. It is a simple story — to motivate people.

If they think they are lost in this dark world, all they need to do is, find a passion and let it guide you.

As I grew as a runner, I grew as a person. I learned to smile again. Have faith and trust ■



## ROAD, LIFE, AND VICE VERSA

**Preeti Aghalayam** spends a day reading Parul Sheth's book and writes a short review

The inspirational first book by Parul is a personal story — an account of her journey as a runner over the past decade. It offers many interesting perspectives, about managing time, marathon training programs, and the myriad advantages of having good running buddies, among other things. The book is based primarily in Mumbai and focusses on the various times Parul has run the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, evolving from a tentative newbie in 2004 to a remarkably improved runner in recent times.

While much of the book is devoted to Parul as a runner, a bit of back-story about her trials and tribulations is provided. This account, albeit brief, ensures that in your mind you will set her apart from the average, middle-aged, woman runner who has been consistently training for and participating in marathons in the country.

A common thread connecting the various chapters in the book is Parul's 2014 race, which she seems to have enjoyed immensely. Drawing parallels between overcoming life's difficulties and conquering the latter half of a grueling marathon, the book flits back and forth along time lines.

Parul's writing style is simple and fuss-free, and, despite various issues with printing and copy-editing, the book is an easy, breezy read. The book is available in both hard copy and kindle versions via online sellers, and you can read Parul's other writings at her [blogtherunningsoul.com](http://blogtherunningsoul.com)



# MORE THAN A RUN!

Amritsar born and raised Sumedha Mahajan, who currently lives in Mumbai, and who wrote her book, *Miles to Run Before I Sleep*, following her milestone run from Delhi to Mumbai, in 2012, shares the journey of her book, with **Akhila Krishnamurthy**

**W**hat inspired the book; your milestone run from Delhi to Mumbai or your very journey with running itself? A day before the run, my father gifted me a diary and said: "I want to see the world through your eyes." So when I finished my run, I started jotting down my experiences, which in turn, became the book. I have written the book for Shirdi Sai Baba and my father. My father inspired me to become a writer as he himself is a writer.

**Was writing your story, a catharsis of sorts?**

Yes it was. I wrote with a heavy heart but I made sure I wrote it in a way my parents don't break down.

**Were you keen to tell your story or did you envision the book also as a means to motivate other runners?**

This book is for everyone. I have shown India through the eyes of a woman and how tough it is for women in this country to fight for their rights and respect in a man's world. Women are second to none.

**As a personal story, were you able to be really honest about articulating both the successes and the challenges that you have faced during your running career so far as well as the Mumbai-Delhi run in particular?**

Yes, I spoke my story, as I never got a chance to speak out my heart in other medium. So when I was writing I couldn't stop myself, as

it was my opportunity to tell my story to the world.

**Running is one thing, writing another; I'm sure there were challenges when it came to writing about running or was the process easy?**

Well, running and writing are both different things. My father is a writer and I guess writing was probably ingrained in me. However, writing my story was tough as I was scared of rejections and I was rejected by 14 publishing houses until Rupa came forward and printed my story. I'm now working on my second book.

**How long did the book take you?**

I took me six months. In December 2012, I started approaching publishing houses.



**Did you write it soon after the milestone run?**

Yes. The run was a life-changing experience. The 1,500 kilometre changed me as a person and I was

almost getting suffocated not being able to voice out. Writing gave me an option to pour my heart out.

**You are a runner, entrepreneur and now an author; do you feel the pressure of having to constantly live up to these roles?**

I love all the roles I'm playing so there is no pressure but they do take a lot of my time; especially my role as an entrepreneur, because it makes me travel a lot and leaving less time for the family.

**Are more books in the offing? Do you have more stories on running to tell?**

I'm working on my second book and it is not on running.

**We are curious about your journey of the book; from ink to print; was it easy and what were some of the challenges and learning lessons?**

Believe me, it is easier to run 1,500 kilometres than to get a book published and get it promoted as a first-time author.

**When you were writing, you were thinking about running; was the vice versa also true?**

Not really. When I started writing, it started off as about running but it went beyond a simple run. It changed me as a person and I have tried to pen down these thoughts in my book. Managing multiple roles, I try not to mix my priorities. I try to get better at each of the roles I play ■