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THE RUNDOWN

A person is running on a path, seen from behind. They are wearing a white tank top, dark red leggings, and white sneakers with orange accents. The background is a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset, with blurred trees and a path.

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHENNAI RUNNERS

ISSUE #7 MARCH 2015

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

Ensuring the fitness of the **strong woman!**

Spinach Malfatti

Ingredients

For the spinach dumplings

- 3 cups finely chopped spinach leaves
- 3/4 cup crumbled cottage cheese
- 2 pinches of nutmeg powder
- 1/2 tsp chopped green chillies
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 2 pinches baking powder
- Salt to taste

For the tomato sauce

- 1 1/2 cups tomato pulp
- 1 tbsp chopped garlic
- 2 spring onions, chopped
- 1 tbsp chilli flakes
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 4 tbsp milk
- 2 tbsp Cardia Refined Olive Oil
- Salt to taste

For the topping

- 1/4 cup grated cheese

Method

For the spinach dumplings

1. Steam the spinach for 5 minutes and squeeze out the water. Keep it aside for use in the tomato sauce.
2. Mix all the ingredients and shape into small balls.
3. Steam for 5 minutes. Keep aside.

For the tomato sauce

1. Heat the Olive Oil, add the garlic and spring onions and sauté for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomato pulp and cook till the sauce thickens.
3. Add the chilli flakes, chilli powder, tomato puree, salt and drained spinach liquid and bring to boil.
4. Add the cream. Mix well and keep aside.

Final procedure

1. Place the dumplings in a baking dish.
2. Pour the tomato sauce on top and sprinkle the grated cheese on top.
3. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 200° C (400° F) for 15 minutes.
4. Celebrate your day with a piping hot healthy snack.



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good health remain high always...*

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THE RUNDOWN

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHENNAI RUNNERS



Akhila Krishnamurthy

Dear Runner,

A new year has begun and three months have already whisked past! For us, at The Rundown, the year opened with some key decision-making meetings. For one, after much deliberation and discussion, we decided to re-visit the size of our quarterly, The Rundown, and make it more — for lack of a better word — compact. We hope that the compactness of the size will permeate into the compactness of the content as well.

You are perhaps reading this edition after the Chennai Runners' anniversary run in the morning. It's a special day, for every runner in the city; special because, in a sense, you, I, we, the runners are really responsible for the running revolution in the city; we are, among its significant contributors. For the core committee of the Chennai Runners, the group that puts its head together, every week, to think up of interesting and innovative ways to further the running community in the city, this day; marks the birth of a small idea that has catapulted into unravelling the potential and possibility of a running community that brings together the city as a whole, irrespective of barriers of location, age, gender, socio-economic backgrounds, physical training, et al...

We at The Rundown, celebrate that spirit of running by featuring 50 runners from across India — nearly 45 from the city or with roots in it — and allow

them the opportunity of sharing the why behind their journey with running. This edition is also special because it marks the birth of a new core committee and at its helm, is the very well-known and much-loved and revered Preeti Aghalayam. Read her President's Note on the next page to know what she intends to rustle up during her stint in the Chennai Runners' kitchen!

In the backdrop of the International Women's Day, on March 8th, and to celebrate women runners, specifically, we introduce you to two women runners, both from Mumbai, who, apart from wearing many hats — entrepreneur, wife, mother — are also runners, and authors. In an exclusive interview, they share the process of writing about running; if you are keen to read their books, I suggest, read our review of them, before you order them, online.

We also have an interesting story on two expatriate runners, who share their personal running experiences of running in a home away from home, with us. Then, of course, you will meet and greet all our regular columnists. We are also hoping to get active on Facebook, so please like us, follow us, and give us feedback, so we do more, and get better!

**Best
Editor**

Hello Runners!

It gives me immense pleasure to address a short note to all you wonderful people. I was selected as the President of Chennai Runners during the year-end get-together in December 2014. It was such a great honour to receive, and for days, it was hard to believe that little old me, had this responsibility for the next two years.

I have been a part of Chennai Runners since 2010, joining up about a year after I moved to Chennai from Mumbai. Although I have been a runner of various sorts in my past life, it was only here that I cut my teeth on long distance running. And it is only due to the camaraderie that is the unique feature of our group.

I am very excited to be given this opportunity, and in line with the vision of the group, I hope to use my tenure to extend in deep manner charity and giving activities; to promote the development of neighbourhood running communities; and to continue to grow the group in an inclusive manner.

The Chennai Runners' core team consists of 18 individuals, each elected because of their enthusiasm, love for running, and interest in contributing to our vision. They are Ananth, Anil, Ashwin, Deepa, Geetha, Gopal, Hari, HariCan, Maha, Nandu, Praveen, Dr Ram, Roy, Shankar, Soundarya, Venkat, Vikram, and myself. The five office-bearers (aside from me) are Vice President - Ashwin, Treasurer - Shankar, Deputy Treasurer - Maha, Secretary - Deepa, and Jt Secretary - Praveen.

As a team, we are great friends and very vociferous people who do not hesitate to express our opinions.



Preeti Aghalayam

Our meetings are filled with debates on various topics, and it is hoped that our collective energies will help make our various dreams for Chennai and for the running community, a reality.

While the 'veteran' Chennai Runners — Ram, Shahid, Senthil (VPS), Krishna, Ramesh — have formally handed over the core team responsibilities, their contributions to the cause are immeasurable, and we sincerely hope that they will stand by us and give us direction and advice. We further hope that we will not belie their trust in our abilities and character.

The 2015 Republic Day saw several groups of Chennai Runners come together to spend time with and make donations (in cash and kind) to less privileged children across the city. The community outreach activities brought together eighteen CR chapters across the city, as one family unit. The numbers of 'Chennai Runner Girls' (or women, if you will) has grown really well. Many of you will have the bright new Chennai Runners T shirts, and the handy safety measures ID bands and whistles with you, by now.

Many more exciting activities and changes are planned for the rest of 2015. As always, our focus will be for everyone to run happy, and run safe. If you haven't already, do join us; sign up for our emails : chennai.runners+subscribe@googlegroups.com; follow us on [twitter @ChennaiRunners](https://twitter.com/ChennaiRunners); come, talk about yourself in our FB group facebook.com/groups/chennai.runners or just come run with us one of these days!

**Cheers
President, Chennai Runners**

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LAST WORD

Running for a cause



Editor

Akhila Krishnamurthy

Editorial Team

Preeti Aghalayam

Ashwin Prabhu

Niranjan Sankar

Design

Smrithi Amarendran

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For editorial feedback, write to

therundown2014@gmail.com



LAVANYA KARTHIK

Lavanya Karthik writes, runs and parents in Mumbai. She also draws comics about her misadventures in writing, running and parenting, some of which you can read at <http://mayabizarre.tumblr.com/>.



ASHWIN PRABHU

Ashwin Prabhu discovered the joys of distance running 10 years back, roughly around the same time he got his first job. Over the years, running clearly has held his interest more than the Corporate world. Case in point, he doesn't hold a desk job anymore today, but still runs 4 times a week and considers himself a Chennai Runner for life.



NIRANJAN SANKAR

The author used to be a lazy couch potato who loved ice cream and beer. He started running 5 years ago, and quickly got hooked. Running has since been a life-changing experience in many ways. He still loves his ice cream and beer (but feels less guilty now about such indulgences thanks to all the running.)



DR MADHU THOTTAPILLIL

Dr Madhu Thottappillil has been practicing Sports Medicine in Chennai for over a decade and a half. He has been associated with various sports bodies in Tamil Nadu in his capacity as a specialist in Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is the Official doctor to the Board of Cricket Control of India for South India and the Sports medicine specialist for the Chennai Super Kings, IPL team.



PREETI AGHALAYAM

Preeti Aghalayam is a Professor at IIT Madras. She is also the President of Chennai Runners currently. She enjoys the (as yet unverified) distinction of being the shortest President of a running club in India. Her favourite things to do are write, read, run, eat chocolate, and of course, give long lectures about molecules and things like that.



RAVI MUNDOLI

Ravi's ancestors are from Trichur, but he considers himself mostly a Vizagite. He decanted into Madras via a somewhat tortuous route involving stops at IIT-M, Amherst, Boston and Hyderabad. Once here, in a moment of insanity, he founded Nadhi (www.nadhi.in), which he helps run now. Or more accurately, it runs him now. His running career started with a bang, a full marathon in the US but he has since learned that ambition is the surest path to ruined sleep (much prized) and so consoles himself with a few sedate HMs every year.



TANVIR KAZMI

Celebrating his 10 years of running in 2015, Tanvir is a runner, blogger, and a tech enthusiast, all rolled into one. Tanvir has participated in about 40 marathons, ultra marathons and other distance events across India and internationally, including the world's largest ultramarathon, the Comrades Marathon in South Africa.

A high-angle photograph capturing the start of a 10K race on Napier's bridge. The bridge's distinctive white arches are visible, and a massive crowd of runners, many wearing yellow shirts, fills the roadway. A large yellow banner with the word 'START' in bold black letters spans the width of the bridge. To the left, a sign reads 'NOV 10K CHENNAI MARATHON'. The scene is set against a backdrop of a river and greenery.

A woman in a blue running shirt with bib number T3978 is high-fiving a person in a white shirt. The white shirt has the text "WALK & DIFFERENCE" and "WALK ALONG" visible. The background shows other runners and a blurred outdoor setting.

A portrait of a 79-year-old man, Rajendran, wearing a yellow t-shirt and a white headband, preparing for the Wipro Chennai Marathon 2014. The t-shirt features the 'CHENNAI SUPER KINGS' logo and the marathon's branding. He is holding a race bib with the number F792 and the date DEC 7, 2014.

The noisy ladies from the half marathon bus whistled loudly in my ear and shouted and created a lot of ruckus near the turn around



Race Director, V P Senthil Kumar, takes a second out from running around to say thank you to all runners, volunteers, and supporters.

point, and I waved them off before heading down towards Napier’s bridge with the vague intention of saying hello to my husband who was running the 10K race. I found volunteers holding a rope as a separator and hung out with them, chased a few buffaloes, and watched in awe as the 10K runners surged past. My colleague and friend somehow recognized me and said hello, but mostly, it was 7,000 people familiar only because they were runners.

My phone started ringing soon enough, with folks informing me that the winners had already arrived in the finish area. I was supposed to interview them for this article, you see. But then I was 10K away, wasn’t I? And I had gotten there on foot and that’s how I had to get myself back to CPT Grounds. By then the sun was bright, the route was super crowded and the full marathoners were getting very little room to run.

I used my special skills of meandering through packs of runners (which is how I manage to run way more than official distances in most races) to help a few full marathoners navigate through. A futile search for a toilet that a lady runner was looking for, handing over a bottle of water (bought by enterprising local runner friends who had enough of fighting the crowds of 10K runners at hydration spots), talking, walking,

running occasionally, got me back on the Thiru Vi Ka bridge soon enough.

Suddenly I found myself with one of the five hour pacer teams (now dwindled to a tiny micro-bus of three people) and joined them in some brisk run-walk sessions towards Madhya Kailas. Near the finish line a young gentleman scared me by asking me for water and then later telling me he had surgery and shouldn’t be drinking water from open cups. It was his first race (10K) and it felt like the best thing to do would be to finish with him, and help him find his family. I bid goodbye to him after noting his name down and promising to be in touch (and directing him to the medical tent, just in case).

“IF YOU ARE LOSING FAITH IN HUMAN NATURE, GO OUT AND WATCH A MARATHON,” SAYS KATHRINE SWITZER

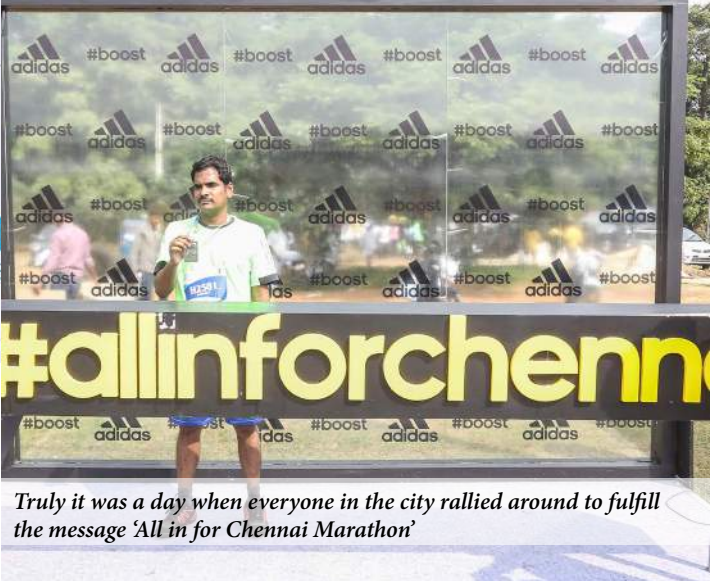
All in all, I ran/walked some 25 odd kms all along the race route that day, and met hundreds of thousands of runners. My mouth hurt from smiling, my hands ached from waving and from the high-fives, my feet from wearing new shoes, but my heart was full. I haven’t run in a single Chennai

Marathon, but at least I came close this year. I may not have worn a bib, I may not have taken a finisher selfie, but I had a really wonderful experience.

At the finish area meanwhile, I watched with a satisfied smile as the winners got their prizes (those giant checks that are handed out — I have never understood them, have you?). Young school student Ajit Clement, who designed our super awesome special medal was there to garland the winners. Reporters thronged for interviews with the speedsters and many an eye teared up listening to their various stories. I tried to call my family but the phone networks were jammed.

But before long it was all over. The race had drawn to a close, the last runner had reached the finish area. A minor fracas over medals ensued. Someone asked me about the location of the baggage van. Someone else wanted water. Should we dismantle the timing mats, someone asked. I had no answers. I sat leaning on a pole in one of the tents and remained there awhile. Group photos of the organizing team were organized expeditiously by moving everyone around me...

“If you are losing faith in human nature, go out and watch a marathon,” says Kathrine Switzer. I feel like I did one better on December 7th, 2014! ■



Truly it was a day when everyone in the city rallied around to fulfill the message ‘All in for Chennai Marathon’



The giant checks for the full marathon winners (men) occupy much more room than the super-fit speedsters!



Ajit Clement was the winner of The Hindu Young World There is a Designer in You contest, and his design was made into the finisher medal for TWCM 2014



The full marathon winners (women) are all smiles as they pose on stage for our photographer!



The spirit of the marathon is more alive than ever in our wheelchair participants!



The beautiful TWCM 2014 finisher medal is a tribute to both Chennai city and The Runner in You



FOREIGN ROADS

... Not foreign, anymore! **Ashwin Prabhu** meets two expatriate runners who tell us what it is like to run on a road, away from their own, and how they enjoy running on their own and in a new city — its people, sights and sounds — for company...

US Diplomat, Tom Brouns, who has spent the last 18 months in Chennai, tells us why he likes running in Chennai...

When and where did you first start running? What got you into running in the first place?

I started running when I was about 14 or 15 years old. I was not very good at sports because I have always been a little clumsy, so while living in Germany, I resolved to become a runner, and started running around the neighborhood. The Nike “waffle sole” had been in existence for nine years. I would carry gummy bears with me for energy along the way. I still do this occasionally today.

What were your thoughts related to running when you first heard you had to move to Chennai?

I was very optimistic about the quickly growing running community, as I had already found and “liked” Chennai Runners on Facebook. I began running with the Alwarpet chapter of runners soon after arrival.

What are your favourite running routes in Chennai? Do you run alone or with company?

I do both. Having a regular meeting time with Chennai Runners gets me out of bed and I enjoy chatting with runners that go the same pace as I do. As a barefoot runner, my favourite spot is on the sidewalk at Marina Beach, because it is so smooth. There is always a breeze, and interesting sights to keep the mind occupied.

Have you participated in any of the local races in India? Talk to us a little about those experiences.

I enjoy racing and have done

various distances at half marathon and below. My ambition was to run a barefoot marathon in India, but this has always eluded me due to illness a few days before the race each time I have registered. I also enjoy running triathlons.

Fellow runners in India are often surprised to see me in 5K races, but I really enjoy (and do best) racing this distance. I am always pleasantly surprised by the number of women and girls in local races, and have observed that running is becoming more and more a family activity in Chennai.

“AS A BAREFOOT RUNNER, MY FAVOURITE SPOT IS ON THE SIDEWALK AT MARINA BEACH, BECAUSE IT IS SO SMOOTH. THERE IS ALWAYS A BREEZE, AND INTERESTING SIGHTS TO KEEP THE MIND OCCUPIED”

Here’s a toughie: How do you deal with the ‘mild and pleasant’ Chennai weather (and the dogs!) on your runs?

It has taken me a long time to adjust to the local temperature and humidity, and I notice I still sweat much more than my local counterparts. I compensate by taking more liquids along the way, but it still impacts my ability at longer distances, as it seems my body simply cannot process that much liquid. Dogs have not been

an issue. I had a 40 kg dog until recently who was my running partner for many years, so the smaller local dogs don’t really worry me.

What’s your go-to Indian carb-loading meal before or after a tough run?

I enjoy Indian food, but I believe it is best to go with what has worked in the past, and what your body is used to. So a mild Italian pasta dish and maybe some toast in the morning remain my normal regimen, as they have been for all 18 full marathons I have completed.

What’s been the most bizarre, funny, ‘this can’t be true’ running experience you’ve had on Indian roads?

Nothing super bizarre has happened. As a barefoot runner, I am surprised by the occasional cow patty on the roadway. But in last year’s Goa Triathlon, I didn’t quite take into account the temperature of the road surface by the time the run would take place after 8.30 in the morning. By the end of the race, I was constantly scampering across the road to find any bit of shade or white paint to run on, allowing several people to pass me!

And finally, what will you miss most about running in Chennai when you leave the country?

The thing I will miss most is the support and camaraderie among runners here. People share in the bond of a common activity and struggle to improve, and share advice. I am always greeted by “Hi, Tom!” from at least a dozen people here during any race, which never happens in my home country. ■

Peggy Wolff, who belongs to Germany and who is a social worker at Isha Vidhya, in Coimbatore, compares and contrasts her running experiences back home, and her home for now...

When and where did you first start running? What got you into running in the first place?

I started jogging in Germany and the US before coming to India but never considered myself to be a runner. In fact, as a teenager, I could barely make it past a few hundred meters! Side stitches would kick in every time I tried. Amongst my siblings, I was the black sheep; I just didn't have the natural strength and flexibility my brother and sister had. Yet I had my favourite sport too, alpine skiing, the deep and steep stuff.

For the rather hectic work-life I had, playing tennis or swimming did not fit in somehow, and skiing was a seasonal affair. It was only here in India that I graduated from jogging to running. I didn't seek it out for health benefits, nor to add another hobby, or to make friends — those aspects are all a happy bonus, but they were never the driving force. What got me into running then?

The primary reason I started running was the work of an NGO I started volunteering called Isha Vidhya. It runs several schools for almost six thousand underprivileged rural kids in Tamil Nadu. So "running for a cause" did it for me. It got me from being a casual jogger to a runner as a means to raise awareness of the still desolate situation in rural education.

I figured, if I put in an extra effort, to run an extra mile, I could boldly approach my friends to support my cause and put in an extra buck that goes to support the rural kids. As I helped to enroll people to run for Isha Vidhya at The Wipro Chennai Marathon, that is, I was matter-of-factly asked: "And you will run too, won't you? I hesitated for a brief second and then my response came out loud and clear, "Of course, Let's do it together!"

What were your thoughts related to running when you first heard you had to move to India?

Coming to Tamil Nadu, I dreaded the heat, humidity, the all year long warm weather, the potholes and above all the mosquitoes! But today, I find I don't visit my parents in Germany even over Christmas or other holidays!

I only leave India when the heat peaks to unbearable levels — at least for a German — in March-April. I love spending time in the snowy Alps that time of the year to ski randonee with friends. I used to jog in the evenings, after work or on the weekends both in Germany and in the US. But running in Tamil Nadu I always run in the mornings when it is still dark. I am lucky to live in the Velliangiri foothills near Coimbatore where there is always a fresh breeze.

What are your favourite running routes in Chennai? Do you run alone or with company?

We have a Isha Vidhya school with over 700 kids in Cuddalore, just 3-4 hours south of Chennai. When I come up to Chennai ever so often, I always have my sneakers in the bag. Over the years, Isha

Vidhya has become the NGO with the largest contingent of runners at The Wipro Chennai Marathon, so I get to run with volunteers every single time I am in town. It is fun to run in a group, in different places, different terrains, at different paces. My favourite running route in Chennai is in the IIT Madras campus. I love those trees.

Have you participated in any of the local races in India? Talk to us a little about those experiences.

I have run twice each in Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai now. My first three half marathons in 2013-14 happened within just seven weeks (with a four-week stint in Australia in between!). From a timid 2:26 finish in Chennai to a much improved 2:04 in Mumbai, I have been getting faster. In 2014-15, it's already been one half marathon every month in November, December and January. Each city is unique!

Chennai in December 2013, stood out for me in so many ways. Of course, being the very first organized race in my life, it no doubt holds a special place. But, the water puddles, the view of the sea and above all the most exuberant after-run party made The Wipro Chennai Marathon 2013 a stand-out race for me. To be exhausted yet still dance for an hour after the finish was incredible.

Delhi of course has excellent weather — cool yet not cold. But I found the course itself rather boring — flat and straight and going through non-residential areas with very less people cheering. It is no doubt a fast course though.



Mumbai has been my favourite of the three races I have run so far in India. The course has its variations, over the Bandra-Worli Sea Link bridge, up Peddar road up, coming up onto Marine Drive and of course, the people, the people everywhere cheering the runners! The entire city seemed to be on their feet cheering me as I ran past.

This year I plan to run the TCS 10K in Bangalore and I am looking forward to that experience as running for me in India now equates to creating awareness and raising funds and in the process have the best fun of my life.

Here's a toughie: How do you deal with the 'mild and pleasant' Chennai weather (and the dogs!) on your runs?

Oh yeah, the dogs! My friends in Germany ask me all the time how I handle that part when I tell them I run "with company". Anywhere in India, be it in urban Chennai or rural Tamil Nadu, or even in remote places like Leh in Ladakh, there are many stray dogs. I always run with an eye on them, picturing them only in half jest of jumping upon my ankles and biting into my achilles! Still, I run the route every day. The dogs seem to have gotten used to my presence in the early morning hours they seem to 'run with' more than 'bark at' me.

What's your go-to Indian carb-loading meal before or after a tough run?

I love ragi kanji and upma but to

be honest, I am not that much into carbs. After a run I prefer citrus fruits, mangoes or pineapples, oranges etc. Once I am done with the fruits, I enjoy ragi dosa or ragi roties and lentils/beans/paneer for protein.

What's been the most bizarre, funny, 'this can't be true' running experience you've had on Indian roads?

Pedestrians crossing the paths of runners in a race, traffic police actually stopping the runners in a race for a few seconds to let cars pass and the Chennai puddles when it rains, these are my India moments in running!

"ACTUALLY, INDIAN RUNNERS ARE AMAZING! THE CAMARADERIE, OPENNESS, DOWN-TO-EARTH ATTITUDE, AND WARMTH OF PEOPLE HERE IS FASCINATING. WHAT STRIKES ME EVERY TIME I RUN IN AN EVENT HERE IS HOW MUCH FUN PEOPLE HAVE WHILE RUNNING"

And finally, what will you miss most about running in Chennai when you leave the country?

In Germany I run mostly in the woods with nobody around. It strikes me every time I go back there how quiet it is all around. And, I have to bundle up much more before I head out for a run. As strange as it may sound, I am guessing I will miss the humid, sweaty climate only because I get to run here in India wearing a simple T-shirt and not worry about multiple layers of running gear to keep the cold at bay.

And, yes, among athletes, and in sports in general there is always a natural bonding, a bonding that bridges our varied backgrounds. If we could all live our daily lives as if we were in an Olympic event, when nations come together that would otherwise not even talk to each other, it would be a wonderful world! And the upcoming first International Yoga Day on June 21, 2015, on the summer solstice, might well be another stepping stone to create that coming together globally!

Actually, Indian runners are amazing! The camaraderie, openness, down-to-earth attitude, and warmth of people here is fascinating. What strikes me every time I run in an event here is how much fun people have while running. Many simply join in, prepared or unprepared, just to do it, to try it out and to have fun.

Yes, it is definitely about giving it ones all yet it is also very much about having fun and not taking oneself too seriously. ■

I RUN BECAUSE

50 runners tell **Akhila Krishnamurthy** why running gives them a high...



"Running to me means enjoying my time and space; it gives me a sense of calm that allows me appreciate the finer things in life."

— Ayshwarya Srinivasan



"Because long distance running helps me make better decisions at work... Because running in a group helps me form long-lasting friendships and celebrate the idea of togetherness. Because **running helps burn stress...** Because running makes me think better, and do better... Because when I run, I motivate other people to do so as well... Because running helps me spread positive energy..."

— Atul Jagadish

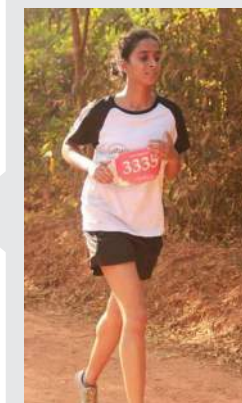
"Hitting the roadblock at the gym, I was looking for something **exciting and challenging**. Sceptical about being able to run 5K, I started out with a plan and guidance from a runner friend. I've been a runner for almost two years now and counting... Nothing comes close to the feeling of having accomplished the goal you have set for yourself. This has made me a runner for life."

— Anuja Bharathkumar



"**I run because it frees me** - from all my inhibitions, my worries and my overthinking ways. I run because it clears my head. When I'm running, I acknowledge nothing but my breathing and the rhythm of my pace. No tendrils of worry or tiny nagging fears can worm their way into my thoughts. There is no greater stimulant to an overcrowded mind than a long run in the fresh, crisp morning atmosphere, when you feel like the whole world is asleep but you. Running makes me feel alive."

— Anuta Mukherjee



"Because running is just something else! You can be just as clumsy as you like, just as slow, just as uncoordinated, to start with. But as the days go by, your legs begin to move faster, your breathing becomes even and then just like that, you can run 15 kilometres and simultaneously maintain an intelligent conversation about the physical interpretation of the law of large numbers. **Running has brought discipline and (so much!) energy into my life.** I run because it makes me get out there and sweat it out, and completely enjoy myself in the process..."

— Arundhathi Krishnan

"Because over time, I have fallen in love with running, and running barefoot. For me, **it is really a way of life.** I've even cracked some puzzles while running!"

— Bindu Upadhyay



“Because running is such *a great stress reliever*... I always say that the run is always hard but my life is so much easier because of it, and that is very true.”

—E T Sathyabalan



“Because running has become an integral part of my life. I have found running to be the best way to keep fit and above all, feel a total sense of physical well-being. A 10K morning run gives me a high that lasts for the whole day. And if I run longer, it lasts that much more. Running *has become a basic need* for me and I am made in a way that my body just can't stay away from it at all. Running has become like breathing.”

— Ganesh



“Because the more I run, the more I love myself; because, every run proves to me that I am capable of more than I ever thought was possible for me. Running brings me closer to the community, gives me a sense of connectedness, helps me make more friends and above all, gives me a sense of calm.”

— M S Gopal

“Because running is the *most natural and simplest way for a human being to stay fit*. Running has helped me improve not only my physical fitness, but also increase mental discipline. Making new friends and expanding my social network has been an unintended positive benefit and the icing on the cake.”

—Madhavan V



“Because it gives me a great sense of discipline and satisfaction, and has changed my outlook towards a more sensible living which i am currently enjoying.”

—Mahesh Jayaraman



“Because *running is my ‘ME’ time*, everyday... just my thoughts and I... Running helps me prove to myself that I am strong, and getting stronger.”

—Eswari Andiappan

“Because it's a *welcome timeout activity* from the daily roller-coaster called life. Especially, the early morning runs when the city is still asleep - perfect time to have those one-on-one conversations with your inner self.”

—K P Sripathi

“Because...

Running is my passion, Running is my obsession.

Running at a good pace, Challenges many I face;

But runners' high I always get, When I achieve my targets set.

Early morning stretch and run, Gives me so much joy and fun.

I love when runners exchange smiles, While traversing those extra miles.

Run run run all ye couch potatoes, Running will make your skin glow like cherry and tomatoes”

—Jayendra Soni



“Because however short or long, I think running improves my health and gives me a feeling of well-being. I believe it reduces the risk of heart disease, among others. That's indeed a brilliant return on the time invested. Plus, I feel running makes me smarter and it makes me feel proud of myself. A recent marathon running taught me how to push beyond my limits. Running is a reliever of stress, I found. Whatever foul mood I go to sleep with dissolves after a morning run. It has given me mental strength too. I work with people and I work on people too. Running helps me to take on the day. After a run, my head is a lot clearer and I am happy to talk to my people.”

—Mangala Bhavani

“Because running is the *simplest form of exercise*. Running needs minimal training and investment unless you try to scale it up to much higher levels. Keep the Garmin out, keep the habit of seeking personal bests every time out, keep the wooing of friends out and keep just your health and the joy of completing a distance (any distance of your comfort) in mind, and you are at your best days matching your school days of unlimited fun.”

—Krish P Raman



“Because running to me means freedom, passion, love, catharsis, me-time!”

—Manish Rahul



“Because *I just can't have enough of it*. I started running accidentally when I was introduced to distance running by some friends. I had perennially been on a weight loss journey and would give up exercising every time I hit a plateau and then gain all that I had lost. But it was different this time... My first surprise was when I could run non-stop for almost an hour; then, I got addicted, and now I can't stop.”

—Harishankar Krishnaswami



“Because *running has defined me the person, I am today*. From a carefree happy go lucky person, I have become a disciplined individual. Running has taught me that in life, there are no short cuts. You have to earn what you dream of. Luck doesn't favor the unprepared. Magic doesn't happen without practice and effort.”

—Kavitha E K

“Because *running sets me free*. There are no boundaries. I leave the stress behind, set a plan for the day and can find a solution to any ailing issue. It's my 'Me' time.”

—Lakshmi Anumolu



“Because *running gives me buddy time with two of my closest friends*... I am actually quite a reluctant runner, and giving up my morning sleep, is a big sacrifice for me. So it took me years to accompany my husband on his morning runs, until I found that all my friends were in his running group, and I was really missing out on some great fun, by refusing to run! So I started to run, and I continue to run, so I won't feel left out of the fun!”

—Meenakshi Ramesh



“Because *I have made several friends in our running group* and now I never miss a chance to run with my BFF, Sita Viswanathan, with whom I chat a lot while running. After the run we have our favourite Filter Coffee with Ragi Rava Dosai (with extra ghee and podi)!”—Divya Harishnakar



"Because to listen to that so-called inner voice, one needs to spend some time in peace. I call it a *Date with oneself*. In today's world, when everyone wants you to be the 'One' they need, you actually need to detach yourself from the rest of the world and find out who you are. I run because I very much like to go on such dates with myself where I can still be Me." —Mili Sharma



"Because running *makes me challenge my own self* every time I hit the road. I am 37 and took up running two-and-a-half years ago feeling that I took it up a little too late in life, but every day that I run, I feel more young, fit, energetic and full of life!" —Sachin R Mehta



"Because running *makes me do better in everything I do*. Since I started regular running about a decade ago, I am pretty much a better person in all aspects of my life. Discipline: It has made me a morning person which had been a lifelong struggle. Stress Management: I find myself handling many of the curve balls thrown at me along the course of the day calmly and more in control. Infectious: Since I took to running, my wife has also taken to running and that has struck out one of the reason for us to fight. Friends: I have many new friends.

They help me run better and become a better person on many other facets of my life. Health: Needless to say, running has kept me healthy. It has kept the eventual onset of cholesterol and diabetes at abeyance. The list could go on and on, but I have already exceeded my word limit, so I stop here. But, I urge you to start running today to discover more of you, because I know you can do more." —Ram Viswanathan



"Because running *brings joy to my soul*. Running has amazing benefits not only in health but also in human relationships. It also makes me feel a sense of accomplishment and helps me connect with the Creator as a wonderful creation!" —Patrick Pitchappa



"Because it *keeps me on my toes in the marathon of Life!* To me, running is a unique and the closest metaphor of life. Can we wish away the rest of the years in our life? Can we push the hours, days, weeks, months, years at our will? To say we do not have a choice but to go through life would be a shame - for life is too beautiful, is it not? Does it not leave us with the power of shaping the journey ahead just by the power of choice? On this long arduous path, there is no right or wrong, but the wonderful opportunity to learn all through the way... just as in a long distance run...I love life. I love running." — Narayanan



"Because *running is exhilarating*. It keeps me fit; lets me make new friends, I see areas on foot which would have otherwise never been possible and it is a very good community-building effort in a world which is divided on the lines of region, religion, gender, sex and social strata." —Rajesh Vetcha

"Because running is the one thing that *makes me feel like I am in complete control* of my body and mind, like I am invincible when things are not going great otherwise. It makes me self-reliant without bringing the people around me down with my worries. From the time back in college while dealing with a kleptomaniac roommate to current days handling a toddler, running has been, is and will be my anchor." —Ridhima Suri



"I used to be a decent runner not by choice but by chance. Back then, all my friends improved, and I didn't. With time, my friends stopped running. I didn't. Fast or slow, first or last, improvement or not, day/night, winter/rains, nothing mattered. I ran. The only thing I knew was the fact that I loved to run and nothing else mattered. Running is no rocket science, if you love it, you will find some reason or the other to run. And if you are passionate about something you would find a way and time to pursue it." —Romil Barthwal



"Years ago, the word 'Marathon' was truly 'Greek' to me. Having run over 15 half marathons, one is attempting to move from 'mara' to 'marathon'. For that, I need to be 'up and running'! *Running is almost meditational and highly relaxing* and what's more, it has a truly 'negative' effect on your waistline ('Hip', 'Hip', Hurray!). All in all, running is all about sweat, toil and cheers!" —S Venkatachalam

"Because running *gives me peace of mind*; I get a high and the endorphins keep me happy all day long. I also get a chance to connect with nature, make friends, challenge my own physical capabilities, health and keep my diet under control. My will power has gotten stronger... Overall, running has been a truly gratifying experience." —Samina Lal



"Because running *makes me feel invincible*; I start my day by saying that I am not one of those people who wish to run rather I am one of the elite brands of people who manifests their thoughts into actions. Running acts as a catalyst in pulling the optimist deep within and it has become a part of me." —Rathna Kumar

"Because running is *among the most inexpensive sports.*" —Roshni Rai

"Because we, as human beings, are wired to believe that the mind is the thinking component and the body, its acting part. As much as this 'robot theory' is true,

running helps the body win over the mind, and this triumph is my runner's high which is safely intoxicating. Healthy addiction with discipline woven into its fabric, the sure shot victory of the body over the mind and health benefits aplenty, come on now, why wouldn't I grab this hamper?" —Rekha Sudarsan

"Because *running is my think time!* I think a lot while running — think of ideas, books that I have read, projects that I work on..." —Sandeep Varma

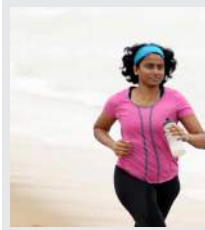
"Because *I enjoy it*... Sounds very simple? It was not all that simple when I first ran my 500 minutes huffing and puffing; eventually I did and managed to drag myself to do a 4K that day. It was not until I did my first half marathon — Chennai Trail — in my second month of running I realised that it was my calling. It was not until I did my 10*10 (10 kms for 10 days) in my 3rd month that I realised it was my meditation. When all the medals I earned smile at me,

when many of my friends/relatives say I inspire them and have taken to running, when I realise that my MFC team is my family... I enjoy it! When I wake up at 4.30am everyday and run to the start point, the day's run sets the tempo for the day... I am geared up for all challenges... I enjoy it! When I ran in the rain, when I ran barefoot, when I see the sunrise in the beach, when I smell salt in my sweat.... I enjoy it ! —Shankar S





"I am a pilot, and running is the closest I can get to flying. While I run, I feel the same way I feel when I am in the skies. I also like to watch my weight, and running is the only sport that has kept me interested till date." – Sunny Chhabria



"Because *running expands my mind*, my thinking. It helps me look within my mind space. After a few minutes of running, I experience a blank mind that is very meditative... very peaceful." —Subathra Jeyaram

"Because *running is my passion* and not just a sport; in it, I find peace, solitude and happiness. Running to me is more than just a physical exercise; it's a consistent reward for victory and today it has given me an identity. Running for me, is a continuous process; it's for life!"

— Shiv Shankar Kosgi

"Because running has made me a more sociable person; it also helps me beat the stress and instils discipline in my daily routine. Running has also helped me meet many people from various backgrounds. Their constant support and encouragement makes me feel good about myself and it is their expectations that want me to set higher goals every time; and I do just that!"

—Vikramadethan Hariharan



"Some call it *workout* but I call it a sort of *meditation*. A time for I, me myself . A total lazy couch potato in terms of exercise who never used to like any sports, I started this just as a form of exercise to reduce the 30 kgs weight that I gained a few years back. Now, running is a part and parcel of my everyday activity. I tell most women my age who tell me they don't find time, that they just need to prioritise and they can see a complete transformation in their lives."

—Viji Swaminathan



"Because it has become my passion; it is a stress reliever to wake up early in the morning and to run with my husband, and in groups. I started running at the age of 42, after a 24-year gap and I haven't looked back till now; it has become a part of my routine. My husband appreciates me on my runs time and again and we are able to spend more time together while running. Running has increased my lung capacity with my yogic breathing techniques. As a reward for my running in marathons, I receive these beautifully designed medals which also motivate me to run, some more."

—V R Sundarambal



"Because *just as some people like to smoke, I like to run*. An early morning run provides me with a high that lasts till lunchtime and beyond. It makes me look forward to my runs. Running has taught me the importance of discipline as well as the need to listen to my body. Weekend runs with other runners makes it even more fun. I get to exchange notes about running and get to check out my running posture as well as do pace work. Given that I started running rather late in life, I am still amazed that I can run non-stop for two hours."

—Suresh Govindarajan



"Today, I race for the Sevenoaks School Cross-country team, and have also run The Royal Parks Half Marathon 2014 for charity, where I raised money to support cancer research. But to me, running is now much more than figures, statistics, races and victories. Running has become that special something, without which I would not be the person I am today. When I am running, I am not haunted by the pressures of my life, nor am I carried away by the successes of it. I am in an entirely different world that's all my own - where nobody can interrupt me."

—Siddharth Ramesh



"I can't say that I run for fitness. If keeping fit is my motive, its enough to do a 5K thrice a week. When you cross the threshold and subject the body to the endurance limits is when you enjoy runner's bliss. The very first marathon was done just to test out human body's endurance limit. But it was during those solitary training runs that I started falling in love with running – early morning sunrise, chirping birds, crisp cool fresh air - I found it really peaceful and more connected to the nature. The mind and body are in sync and I reach a meditative state. *Once you experience the runner's bliss, its an addiction from there on, but a good one.*"

—Geetha Shankar

"Because running especially long distance running *teaches you the art of patience!* It teaches you to enjoy the process and remain patient till you reach your destination. Every morning when I run I get home with that little but very relevant takeaway."

—Arun Kumar

"Because *I love the road; and running just helps me keep that connect with the road*, just put your shoes on step out and shuffle... it helps... There are some phases to my running — alone, with a group but alone, and with a buddy. All three phases have had their share of experiences. With a buddy, it is fun because it is great to be able to run with someone with whom you can speak your mind and share your silence. That's a blessing!"

—Rajesh Subramanian



"Because running keeps *me in good health.*"

—P Venkatraman



7-MUST!

Delhi-based marathoner, **Tanvir Kazmi** recommends seven popular must-run marathons in the country and writes about what makes each run, unique...

DELHI HALF MARATHON

This is India's second oldest mass participation running event after the Mumbai Marathon. Having begun in 2005, last year was the event's tenth edition. If runners are looking at perfect running conditions, this is the event to go for. There's a beautiful nip in the air, the roads are perfectly laid out and the traffic control and management is worth reckoning. If you are looking for a Personal Best, this is the run to go-to. The marathon starts at the JN Stadium, takes you through Lodi Road, past the magnificent India Gate, Rajpath, Rashtrapati Bhavan, some of the best stretches of Lutyens Delhi, and back. This is India's second largest half marathon event, second only to the half marathon event of the Mumbai Marathon.



MUMBAI MARATHON

Counted and recognized as one of the oldest marathons in India, to encourage participation of non-elite runners, people who run for fitness, passion, or fun, the first edition of the Mumbai Marathon was held in the year 2003. The route takes runners from the historic and picturesque settings of Victorian era architecture buildings in Mumbai's Fort area to the Bandra seaside and back. Important landmarks on this route include the beautiful Marine Drive, the Malabar Hill leading onto the dreaded Peddar road flyover particularly on the way back, and the smiling and cheering kids and women, passing by the famous Siddhivinayak temple, over the Bandra-Kurla sea link, and by the Mumbai Race Course. This event besides being India's largest marathon also holds the title of the largest half marathon in India.

HYDERABAD MARATHON

Labelled as India's toughest city marathon, this no doubt brings out the best from its participants. Started in 2010 and organized by the community of the Hyderabad Runners, this event leads the way in terms of perfect execution. Nearly 1,300 volunteers in the 2014 edition made sure every runner was taken good care of, no matter how late she/he finished. At the Expo (the previous day), I heard runners joking about this marathon being like one Mumbai Marathon Peddar Road flyover after another all the way, and after participating in it, I can attest to that. This is one seriously tough marathon. Except for the initial ten kilometers around the Husain Sagar Lake, the rest of the route is almost all up and down with hardly any breather. I've heard even the pacers find this terrain tough!



BENGALURU MARATHON

The city of Bengaluru got its taste of the first really well-organized marathon with the inaugural Bengaluru Marathon in 2014, and it did not disappoint. The entire running community of Bengaluru rallied around to organize this event. The run starts and finishes at the Kanteerava Stadium, and takes you by the Ulsoor Lake, Indira Nagar, and Koramangla suburbs of the city. A very inspiring part of the run was a two-kilometer stretch around the city's Cantonment area where men from the Army were out in full numbers cheering the runners. Traffic management was a challenge in the inaugural edition, but as the run matures, I am confident this will be taken care of. In terms of the finisher count, this marathon has already become India's second largest marathon right in the first year of its arrival. And as if that wasn't enough, the 2014 edition had running legend Haile Gebrselassie visiting the city to promote the event. It was a delight, really, to hear him at the Expo.

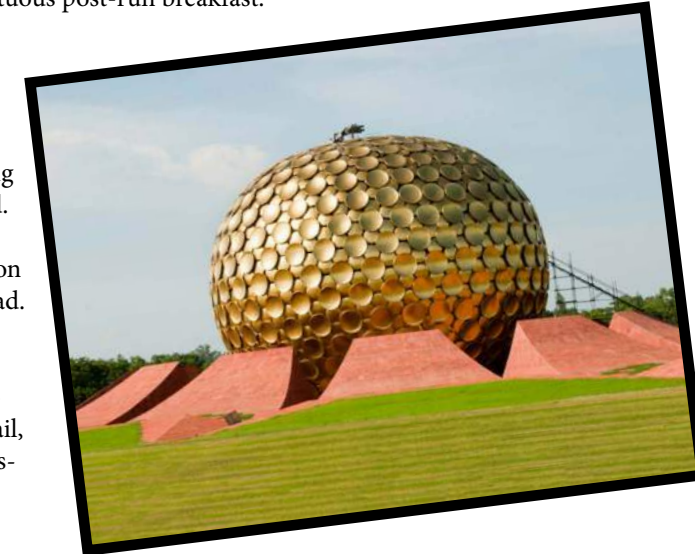


CHENNAI MARATHON

One of those few large city marathons organized by a local running community that has grown by leaps and bounds — the Chennai Runners - the event is now into its 3rd edition and is representative of the running spirit of the city with various running groups from across the city turning up for the run in their special group T-Shirts. The atmosphere at the start of the run is really quite festive; in the year that went by, they even had a drone flying over cheering participants and captured the mood of the runners. The run starts from the Kasturba Nagar MRTS and takes runners past the scenic Elliots beach all the way up to the War Memorial and back. The city weather sets up a challenging run with a humidity that is high, although you must know that in December, Chennai is enjoying winter. Finishers are rewarded with a specially designed and beautifully crafted finisher's medal, and a sumptuous post-run breakfast.

AUROVILLE MARATHON

Another community event which is a must in your running calendar is the Auroville Marathon, now eight editions old. Started in 2008 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of Auroville, the marathon sees good participation from runners in Chennai, Bengaluru, Kochi and Hyderabad. The event offers a pristine running natural forest trail, and with a highly competent and disciplined team, this is a marathon you will not forget for a long time. Runners also ensure they participate in it to soak in the beauty of the trail, the peacock sightings, lush green forests, and the enthusiastic local drummers who keep runners motivated.



GOA RIVER HALF MARATHON

Promoted as "India's only Beach-and-River-Side Marathon", The Goa River Half Marathon winds through the picturesque Vasco town, and has a gorgeous route which runs along the river Mandovi. And of course since it is Goa, it is always fun to mix the run with a vacation outing for the entire family. The runners admire it for the serene riverside track with rolling hills and also for the tireless and sincere effort of the volunteers of the Vasco Sports Club that makes the run what it is. Runners are provided with peeled oranges and bananas, post-run physiotherapy sessions, a massage, and oh, there's even a post-race party with some great live music and well, free beer!

Photos' Coutesy: Internet

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*...

What 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

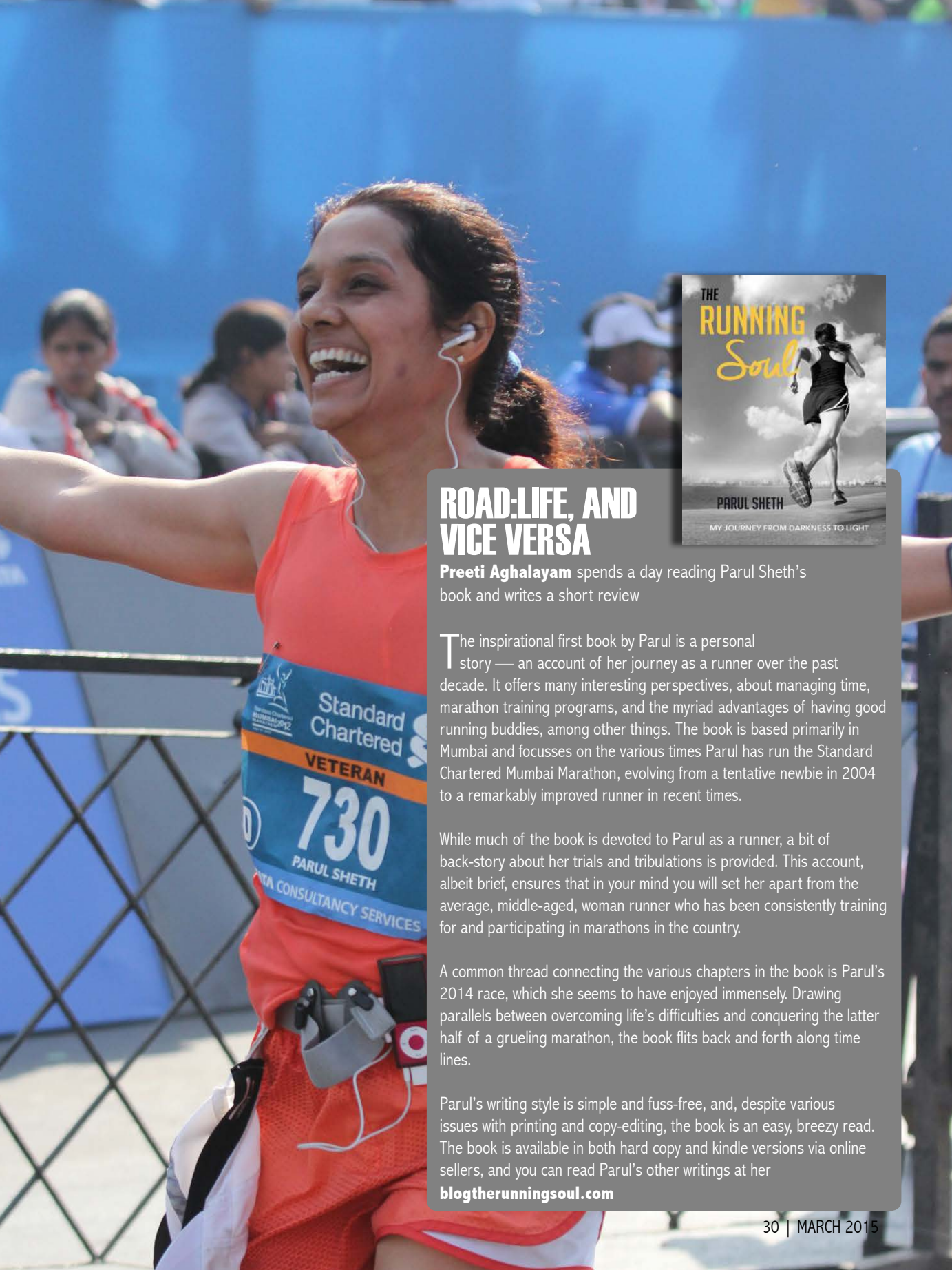
a few hours. So you need to enjoy the ride rather than focus on the destination.

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



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**

What 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 ■

PRETTY PERSONAL

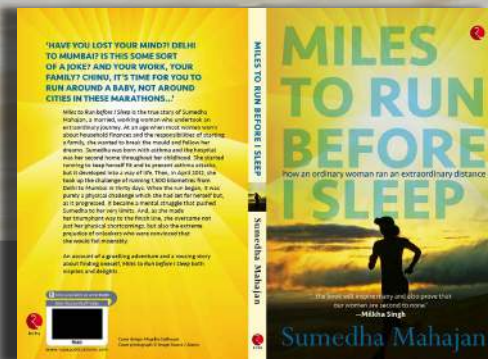
Preeti Aghalayam reviews Sumedha Mahajan's *Miles To Run Before I Sleep* and gives it a nod...

Another first-time author, another Indian woman runner from Mumbai, another autobiographical tale. But that is where the similarities between “Miles to run before I sleep” and “The running soul”, seem to stop. While Parul’s book is all about training and graduating from half marathons to full marathons in a very structured and planned manner, Sumedha’s book is about falling off the cliff and just starting to run.

Overcoming asthma, and many other health issues, Sumedha plunges into the Mumbai full marathon, as her first foray into running. No half measures for this girl and pretty soon she is dreaming of running much much more than 42 Kms! Teaming up with five men for an NDTV show on raising environmental awareness, Sumedha ran 1500Kms from Delhi to Mumbai, across hot, dusty and polluted cities and highways in April 2012. The book is an account of this run, this insanely grueling journey.

A dense book that is thrilling in a gossipy way, it is a day-by-day description of the 30 days of running it took to cover 1500Kms, overcoming several health issues and personality clashes in the team, along the way. The occasional descriptions of the geographical terrain, and environmental issues are interesting, while Sumedha’s interactions with the locals and their reactions to her (attire, mostly), are unsurprising.

Sumedha’s writing is very personal and from the heart, and you will get your money’s worth from this book by Rupa Publications. It is available online via various sellers.



SHIN SPLINTS

Dr Madhu Thottappillil on Shin splints....
The what and how to keep them at bay

Photo Courtesy: Internet

We always want quick results! Quick return on investments, quick loss of weight after dieting, quick recovery after an accident! The same goes for exercising. We want to 'see' quick results, not realizing our bodies have an agenda of its own! One cannot push it to limits in a bid to see results. While I am a believer of the power of mind and all, I worry about what we put our bodies through in the process! More importantly our legs that bear the burden of the entire body!

It goes without saying while running the legs play a major role. There are those that enjoy running and run for the pleasure. These people do things in a slow, methodical and gradual manner. Their focus is on long-term benefits and their approach towards running is unhurried. And there are those impatient ones that push themselves relentlessly the moment they realize they can run! It's the second category that is cause for worry because they

overload their legs. They seldom do the stretches required and they don't take care to ensure they are wearing the right type of shoes. I have also seen people running with loads strapped to their backs, or setting incline mode on treadmills, because they have read somewhere that all that means loss of more calories and hence increased weight loss overnight! Such people often come limping to me with what is commonly called Shin splints.

Shin splints usually refer to a group of conditions that result in pain in the legs which occur in the area below the knee joint right up to the ankle. The most common site of the pain is along the inner aspect of the front of the leg (Medial Shin Splints) and is medically called Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome (MTSS) or even Posterior Tibial Syndrome. The pain could also be on the front of the leg (Anterior Shin Splints) which are more commonly stress reactions or stress fractures.

Shin splints are one of the most common injuries in beginners and also seen in experienced runners who change their workload.

Symptoms

Symptoms include recurring, dull, aching pain along the lower two thirds of the leg, especially on the inner side. The pain is usually generalized and may be worse early in the morning while waking up.

Causes

- Most common cause is sudden increase in load, too soon while running or training
- Over pronation of the foot (most common cause for Medial splints)
- Wearing shoes that are overly worn
- Inadequate stretching before a run
- Imbalance between the muscles in the front of the leg and the calf muscles (causes Anterior shin splints)
- Weakness of the 'Core' muscles and the Hip stabilizer muscles

Management

- The first step towards any kind of management is not to ignore it and keep running, but to stop running. The area needs rest.
- Icing of the affected area needs to be done frequently.
- Stretches for the Achilles and Calf should be done periodically.
- **Seated Shin Stretch** (While Kneeling on a mat, keep your legs and feet together keeping the toes pointed back. Slowly sit back onto your calves and heels, pushing the ankles into the floor until tension is felt in the muscles of the shin. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds, relax and then repeat.)



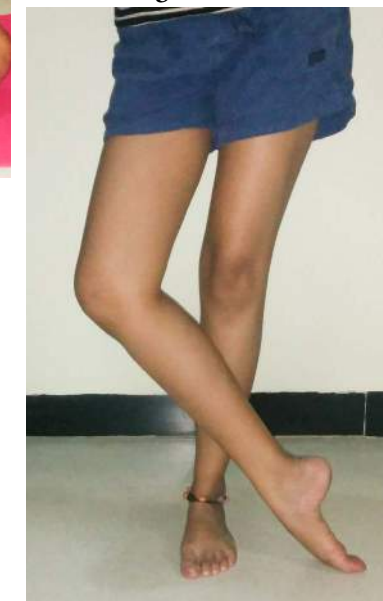
- Other stretches are the **Anterior Compartment stretch**



and Heel raises



and Standing Shin stretch



- Tracing the alphabets on the floor with the toes, while being seated. This can be done twice daily.

- I encourage Pool walking, running and cycling during recovery.

After the pain has settled

substantially, while restarting to run again, care must be taken to increase the load very gradually, typically ten percent increase every five days. Also the correct shoes or orthotics need to be in place before the runs are started again, especially for the Overpronators.

Prevention of Shin splints

- Avoid 'Too much Too soon' while starting off running and also during training.
- Avoid running on excessively hard surfaces.
- Replace worn out shoes.
- Try to choose running shoes that incorporate your specific foot type, for eg. Overpronators will benefit from the 'Motion control' range of shoes.
- Always stretch before a run

Things to watch out for ...

Two conditions that are mistaken for Shin splints and have a very similar presentation need a consult with your doctor immediately.

► **Stress fracture:** They typically present on the anterior part of the leg and the pain is more pronounced over a specific part of the leg (unlike shin splints which is more generalized). Stress fracture pain usually feels better early in the morning after sleep.

► **Compartment syndrome:** This is present more on the Outer aspect of the Leg. The pain is usually severe and increases on running. It can be dangerous if left untreated, hence it is always better to consult a doctor for pain on the outer aspect of the leg, so that he may rule out a compartment syndrome.

Slow and steady wins the race I've heard. I am always all for slow and steady! To that I'd add sensible and patient wins the longer haul. So take care! ■

DEAR LADYBHAAG

BY RAVI MUNDOLI



International Women's Day is around the corner. The moment you read the words "international women", some of you are asking, "Which corner?" This is precisely what IWD is about and is not about. In honour of the women runners of Chennai and beyond, we have a very special guest Ms. Runjini Rungaswami who is a familiar sight on the streets of the city. For those of us who wake up before 5 a.m., at any rate...

As we all know well, thousands of years ago, ancient Indians actually invented almost all the modern technologies you see today. High manoeuvrability aircraft, thermonuclear fusion, and plastic surgery come to mind. Even that acme of technological achievement, the leopard print earmuff was invented by a Mylapore maama from 4270 BC with authentic, ethnic, traditional materials. This also explains why there are no leopards in Mylapore today.

Anyway, the important point is that one of the unspoken and unsung creations of that era is a Massively Parallel Hyper Efficient Super Resilient Low Maintenance High Reliability All in One Being. Unlike the other inventions, this being (like the leopard print earmuffs) is real, has been around since then, but doesn't get due

recognition in jobless running articles (unlike the leopard print earmuffs). You and I know her as friend, colleague, wife, daughter, mother, sister and so on.

Several readers have expressed their curiosity about how such an overloaded system is able to keep executing its main program flawlessly, and concurrently able to add on the load of the Waking Up Before 5 a.m. subroutine. This edition is in response to these very natural koschans.

Q: Dear Runjini, why?
-- Mrs Misogynus

A: Why not? For the same reason that anyone else runs. Health, wellbeing, nei roasts, and Facebook posts which you can use to subtly mess with your classmates' and friends' heads ("Bad day. Ran out of gas between the 79.2 th and 79.8th kilometre and finished with a bad PB of 4:07. But Chennai at 3:30 a.m. is unbelievably beautiful #Feeling Blessed. Sigh. Need to finish off my proof of the Riemann Hypothesis today. Later, peeps.")

Also, many years ago, the people who wrote our Constitution promised everyone freedom of speech, thought, and action and safety of life and limb without regard to gender etc. If you've noticed, we've done a stellar job of ensuring these rights... Well, not

to put too fine a point on it, this is the only time of the day some of us can safely be on the streets without being set upon every 10 minutes. Only every 30 minutes.

Q: How do you manage to get so much done at work and at home and still manage to run every week? I am barely able to make it out of bed.

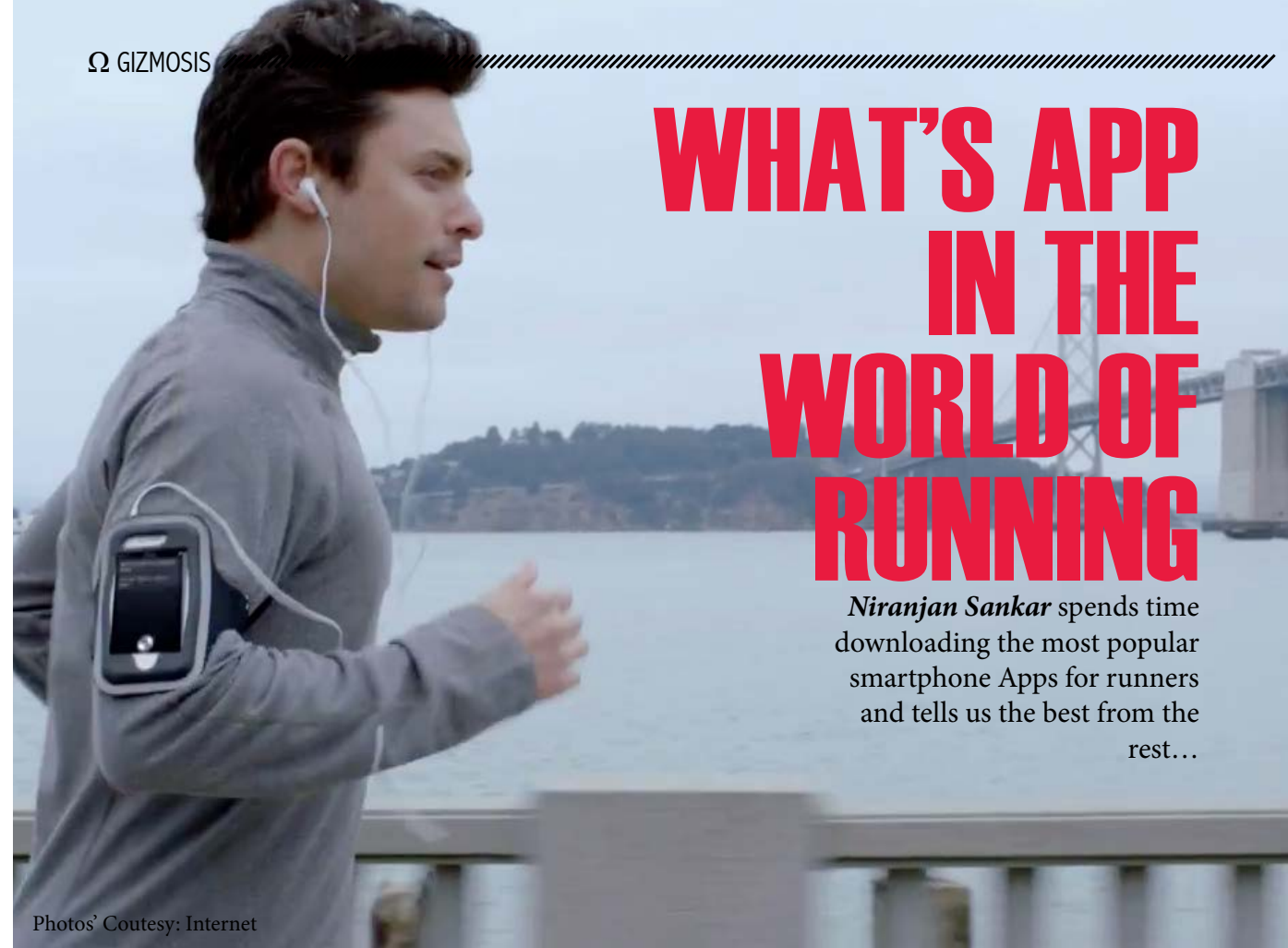
-- Guilty Conscience Guy

A: For starters, you need to go through a relatively minor procedure. Find a competent surgeon and ask her to put you under and surgically detach the remote control and the cellphone from your clammy fingers. This itself will add at least a couple of hours to each day. Then, maybe sign up for a couple of chores, and you'll discover that (a) your stamina is going up and (b) the fine art of making a schedule and sticking with it. It's plain sailing after that. Join the Chennai Runners, quite a few of them suffer from this Pre5amRisingitis, and insane levels of enthu which will soon afflict you and you're on your way.

Q: Wat r yr fvrt routes in Madras? Wd lv 2 join n mk frndshp w/ u...

-- Herr StalkHer

A: I prefer Mount Road between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Shall we meet outside the Teynampet signal police station tomorrow morning?



Photos' Coutesy: Internet

WHAT'S APP IN THE WORLD OF RUNNING

Niranjan Sankar spends time downloading the most popular smartphone Apps for runners and tells us the best from the rest...

Running is an easy sport. It doesn't take much to step out onto the road, and just run. However, many runners don't want to 'just run'. They want to track their runs and see much how much they have run, and how fast. For beginner runners, this can be very motivational as it helps them set goals and monitor their performance and improvement over time. More experienced runners usually have specific training plans, and tracking runs is very important to see how well they are adhering to their plan.

Most of the tracking apps or devices also have a feature to upload your run data to the web, so you have a log of all your

workouts online to review and share.

A GPS watch is a good option to track your runs, as this is specifically designed for this purpose. It is very convenient to use and read, and usually provides better battery life.

However, if you are not really keen on spending a good amount of money (GPS watches start at around Rs10,000 and go up to Rs30,000 or more), or don't want another device to carry around, a smartphone app would be a good idea. Most of us have smartphones these days, and many running apps are free. The rest cost very little — a few hundred rupees at most.

So why not get some additional use out of your phone, which can do so much more than the usual Text/Whatsapp/FB routine?

Please note, however, that GPS usage can drain your phone battery quickly, so ensure there's enough charge in your phone to last through your workout. Also, phones are not too convenient to carry and look at during your runs, so invest in a comfortable armband which protects the phone.

All these GPS apps can pretty much track your runs, show pace/distance data in real time, upload the data to a website, and share your workouts socially, but each has some differentiating features.



Runkeeper (iOS, Android) (Free):
 ▶Most popular running app, with tons of features in the Free version
 ▶Integrates with many fitness devices, including smart watches like Pebble and Android Wear
 ▶Supports Heart Rate Monitors, provides audio updates
 ▶Can share activities with Facebook and Runkeeper friends
 ▶For a fee, you get training plans for various distance or time or weight loss goals, including run-walk plans designed by Jeff Galloway, recommended for beginners
 ▶The Elite version also features the ability to broadcast your run live for your friends!

Endomondo (iOS, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry) (Free):
 ▶An app that aims to keep your workouts fun, through a lot of social features and sharing within the Endomondo community and outside
 ▶Audio feedback, exchanging 'pep talks' with friends, racing against a friend's best performance, etc, are all free features aimed at keeping your workouts fun and interesting
 ▶The premium version adds personalized training plans, weather info low power options to conserve battery on long workouts.

Wahoo Fitness (iOS, Android) (Free):
 ▶For advanced data and metrics on your run, this is probably the app to go with
 ▶It pairs with a range of Wahoo! fitness devices which can be used simultaneously This data helps analyze your gait and improve your running economy.
 ▶You can also upload your workout data to any of the popular training websites like Garmin Connect, Runkeeper, Nike+, etc. to share with friends using that platform
 ▶Be aware that some of the advanced features do not work on all Android devices.



Zombies, Run! (iOS, Android) (Rs250):
 ▶For more 'action' during your run, this is a great game/ running app
 ▶The premise is that you choose a workout, or 'story', put on your earphones, and run
 ▶During the run, your mission is revealed, and as you run you collect important stuff and rescue people. If you're slow the moans of the zombies chasing you gets louder, and you need to speed up to avoid being eaten!
 ▶There is also a variant called 'Zombies, Run! 5k Training' (Rs120), which guides you through an 8 week training programme with a similar storyline woven in. And the zombies start chasing you once you're ready!



Nike+ (iOS, Android) (Free):
 ▶You can participate in numerous individual and group challenges (Chennai to Bengaluru, anyone?)
 ▶Nike has a range of training programs and coaching expertise you can tap into through this app
 ▶Cheers' feature: When you start a workout, Nike+ can post a status update to your Facebook account. Each time you get a 'like' or 'comment' you get a loud audio cheer in response!
 ▶'Power Song' feature, where you can set your favorite go-to motivational song ('Eye of the Tiger', maybe?), and click an icon when you need a boost during your workout.



Map My Run (iOS, Android, Blackberry) (Free):
 ▶This can be used for almost any kind of fitness activity
 ▶Map My Run has millions of running maps on its website, and if you are in a new city, you can look for workout routes nearby and load them for your next run
 ▶The app also connects with heart rate and other sensors. For a fee, you get audio coaching, live tracking, etc.

The rewards of the running life come dressed in strange disguises

Pain. Exhaustion. Lost sleep. Lost toenails. Pain. Friction burns - everywhere!! Misery. Did I mention pain?

The Loneliness of the open road.. ..and the risks that go with it.

The guilt that every minute spent running is a minute away from a hundred other priorities

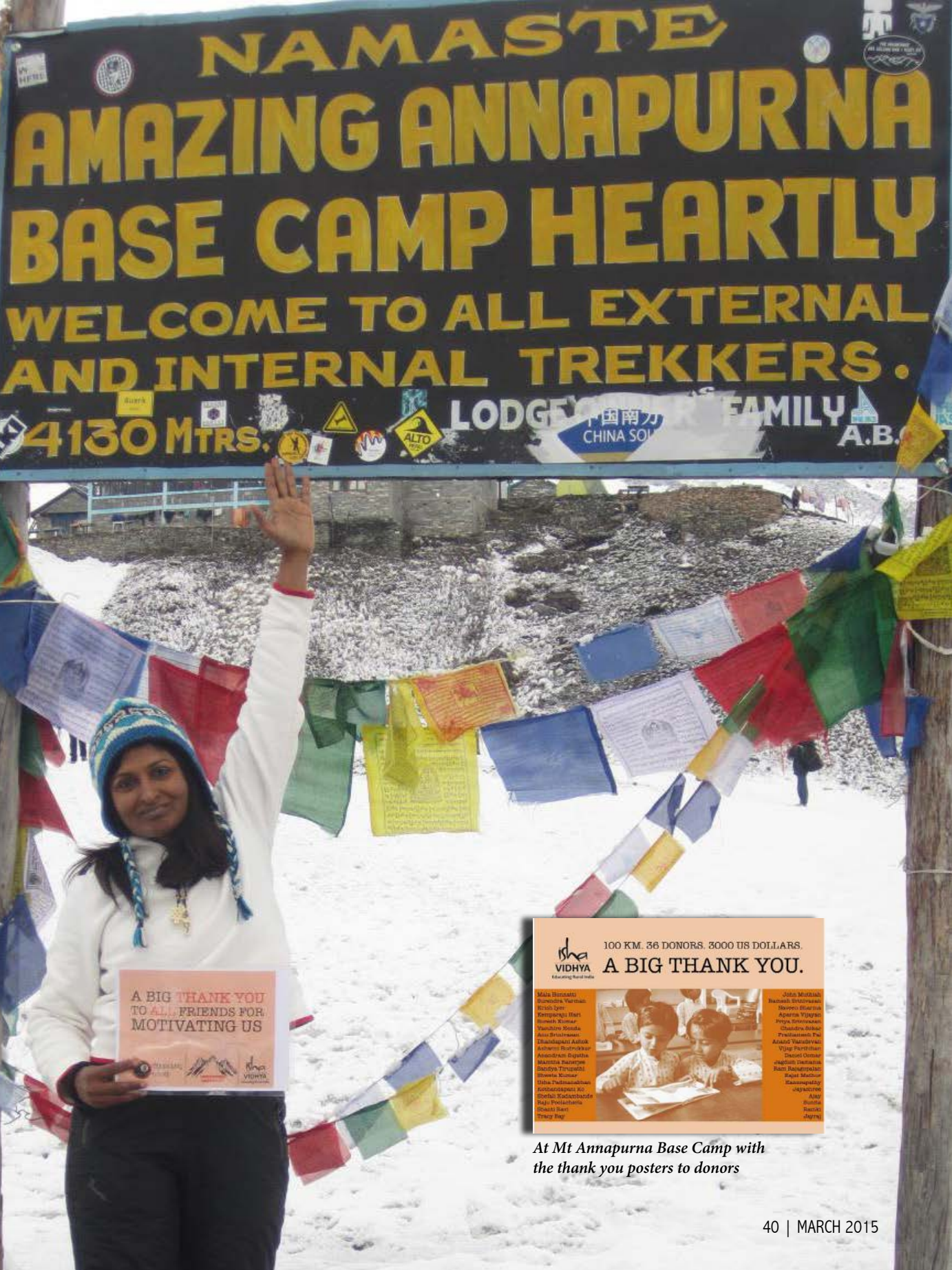
Fear that you will never, ever get any better at this....

..and frustration over how easily everyone else seems to.

And the discovery that you are still here. Still strong. Still running.

Because you are woman enough!

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At Mt Annapurna Base Camp with the thank you posters to donors

POETRY WITH A PURPOSE

“When the run finds a purpose, the world conspires to make it come true,” writes **Dr Priya Vaidyanathan**, a runner from Malaysia who has been, through her runs, raising funds for Isha Vidhya

A run transcends your physical limitations. It works on body, mind and spirit, keeping it healthy and vibrant while keeping various illnesses at bay. As a physician, I needed to practice what I preached, and get my own physical health in shape. That is what got me started.

But then I discovered that ...
Actually, running is poetry in motion

Running is the magic woven into the mundane of everyday life for me. When the thud of my feet connects with the rhythm of my breath it is a blissful meditative state and there is inner peace. It uplifts my spirit; I love the cool breeze blowing through my hair, golden sunrays kissing my skin and the smell of mother earth, fresh flowers and leaves. I am a child all over again bouncing with joy.

This joyous overflowing energy connected me more deeply with my inner self, helping me recognize that ...

Running becomes more beautiful when it has a purpose...

What started off as a journey

towards personal health and well being, became more beautiful when it blossomed into something larger than ‘Me’.

It started off in May 2012 when I was attempting to trek to the Mt Everest Base Camp with my co-sister. On a whim, with the encouragement of a friend and runner, Natasha Ramarathnam, I set up a fundraiser for Isha Vidhya with SeeYourImpact.org. When we raised nearly \$6000 to send around twenty children to school, in my heart, I knew that the journey that started off as yet another trek was going to be the beginning of something far more profound.

Since then every run and trek has been towards this larger cause of sending underprivileged rural children to school at Isha Vidhya (<http://www.ishavidhya.org/>) and see them smile.

“IT IS TRULY MOTIVATING TO KNOW THAT EVERY STEP I TAKE HELPS REALIZE THE DREAM OF THESE CHILDREN, IN MY OWN SMALL WAY ”

It is truly motivating to know that every step I take helps realize the dream of these children, in my own small way. This is indeed my biggest motivator to run since the last few years.

And, along the way, I found out that ...
When the run finds a purpose, the world conspires to make it come true

This first Everest Base Camp expedition was followed by my first ever ultra-marathon distance of 50kms at Bangalore Ultra in November 2012 and the 100kms Nilgiris Ultra Marathon by GlobeRacers in December 2013. These two long distance runs demanded my utmost physical endurance, mental strength and emotional determination.

It was made possible because so many people from my running guru Daniel Vaz, to my running mentors, to my Nilgiris buddies to the race organizers and all the donors to my fundraiser who conspired to make this happen for me. These races taught me that one is never alone in the world, when one makes up their mind to do something good. I am just immensely grateful to everyone



The smiles on their faces ignites my passion



Running 50kms at Bangalore Ultra. Pic Courtesy Anju KP for Runners For Life



Trekking Divas to Mt Annapurna Base Camp for Isha Vidhya

who supported the cause and enabled 25 children to go to school for that year.

Even as I am grateful to my mentors and supporters, I would be negligent if I do not mention the sterling effort being done by the staff of Isha Vidhya schools. I personally visited the school at Coimbatore twice and witnessed their passion and energy firsthand. This only further strengthened my resolve to fundraise for them.

And it is only my good luck that ...
More people are now joining hands to make this world a better place

Subsequent to the runs, sometime in April 2014, I trekked to the base camp of Mount Annapurna with seven other soul sisters, mentally encouraging and pushing each other. This became even more exhilarating when we saw the sheer joy and fortitude of the people in the hills; living minimalist simple lives to the fullest.

When one experiences this first hand, the idea of 'needs versus wants' changes dramatically, and expands your idea of the world beyond your narrow confines.

Even as we embarked on this

journey, we knew in our hearts that the trek was not for our own egos, but for a larger humanitarian purpose of sending underprivileged rural children to Isha Vidhya schools.

So, what's my last word?
I started running for my health. Then, I discovered the sheer joy and poetry of the movement. But I realized its true best when I found a purpose that repeatedly ignites my passion for running — the innocent smiles of my children at Isha Vidhya. I hope and pray that you find your purpose, and start running for it! ■

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