



International Journal of Research in Academic World



Received: 09/April/2023

IJRAW: 2023; 2(5):43-45

Accepted: 11/May/2023

The Race of My Life: An Unconditional Anecdote of Suffering and Success

*¹Dr. Shaikh Kalimoddin Rashid

*¹Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English & Research Centre, Maulana Azad College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Rauza Bagh, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract

The present research paper primarily focuses on the hardships and the sincere efforts of Milkha Singh through his acclaimed autobiography entitled *The Race of My Life*. It highlights on the truthful accounts of an ordinary boy turned into one of the most iconic male athletes of India. In fact, it offers success mantra to the athletes who believes in himself/herself through regular practice, hard work, self-discipline, dedication and determination. It defines the self-controlled and motivated persona of Milkha Singh who converts dreams into reality. This paper tries to shed light upon the traumatic experiences of Milkha Singh during partition and separation of family. It focuses on Milkha Singh's loss of family members, inhumanity unwilling migration. It covers harrowing past, the hardships he encountered during his army life and international fame as an undisputed one of the best athletes of India. the days spent in army along with a. The present autobiography offers a truthful account of his childhood days, personal life, and the influential events that offered him an identity as a 'Flying Sikh.' The present paper tries to shed light on the personality traits of Milkha Singh. To be more precise, it deals with the issues of tragic past, loss of dear ones, religious hostility, hatred, unshakable faith in self, irresistible practice, a success story of an athlete and a proud father.

Keywords: Anecdote, suffering, mantra, success, race

Introduction

Milkha Singh's *The Race of My Life* (2013) is undeniably a very candid autobiography. He shares his own tale in an amazing way while covering all the odds in his life and overcoming those with determined efforts. *The Race of My Life* is journey through twenty chapters which equally contributes to the episodes in the life of Milkha Singh. It opens with an inspirational couplet in Urdu as,

*Mita de apni hasti ko agar koi martaba chahe,
Ki dana khak may mil kar gul-e-gulzar hoata hai* ^[1].

The first chapter in Milkha Singh's biography is an account of his happy life along with the members of his family in a small village called Gobindpura in Muzzafargarh district (now in Pakistan) an undivided India. His tale of suffering commences with the partition of British India into India and Pakistan while referring to this he says,

We found ourselves on the wrong side of the border...People no longer behaved like human beings; they had become animals. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were brutally massacred, thousands of homes destroyed, mothers lost their husbands and children. There was only bloodshed everywhere ^[2].

Milkha Singh witnessed inhumanity of the partition. He saw cruelty and brutal nature of humans who mercilessly attacked,

forced to convert the others and killed many innocent lives. He narrates the trauma of losing his parents, siblings and the members of his family as,

I found out what happened to the rest of my family that night; how my brothers, Daulat and Amir, killed their own wives and daughters lest they fell into wrong hands, before they themselves were slaughtered; the deaths of my baby brother, Gobind, and sister, Makhani... More than fifteen hundred villagers perished on that fateful day in Gobindpura ^[3].

While reacting on this heart-wrenching tragedy he said he had no clue how to pick up the pieces of his shattered life. The memories of those bloodthirsty events haunts Milkha Singh always. For him this is one of the greatest tragedies of history. Though he was in search of work but people were wary of employing refugees that worsened his pathetic situation even the members in the family of his sister, Isher don't want him in their house. While speaking about the treatment to him in her family, he says,

I soon realized that I was not welcome. Jeet's family constantly taunted and mocked me by saying that I was a useless, good- for- nothing fellow, who could only sit around all day and eat their food; that I should go out and fend for myself rather than being a burden on them ^[4].

The days of humiliation and distress of Singh ceased as he joined the army with his brother's recommendation and was selected at the army's recruitment camp held in Kashmir in 1952. Though he was happy being in the army but soon he discovered how tough and disciplined life in the barracks was. The strict rules and regulations of recruits' daily routine, the rigorous training were difficult tasks for him to adopt and wanted to run away but when such thoughts came to his mind, he used to recall his early hardships and thinks, army life may be tough, but it is better than the sufferings I had endured earlier^[5].

The second part of this research paper highlights on the successful life of Milkha Singh. According to him a fortunate incident that changed the course of his life was a six-mile race in which he came sixth held in January 1953. As remembers his name was announced before a large gathering of almost three hundred recruits and as per the announcement, he would be given an extra glass of milk every day. He was overwhelmed with the joy of attention he received. For him that was the starting point of his career as an athlete. Milkha Singh believes taking part in the Bridge Meet in which he has to run 400 metres was his Eureka moment, as he says,

When I made a solemn promise to myself that I would not rest until I, too, found a place in that hollowed world of Indian athletes who had the privilege of displaying our country's name on their blazers and vests^[6].

Milkha Singh's successful participation in The EME Centre's meet, the Southern Command Sports Meet, the Combined Services Meet in Ambala gave him national recognition. Despite the injury and doctor's advice not to run in the National Games held in Patiala in 1956; he took part in it and came fourth, and finally selected to represent India at the Olympics in Australia. While speaking about his determination to participate in the National Games though a bunch of people pinned him down, thrown a blanket over his head and hit hard on his legs in order to prevent him from winning but that incident made him more determined for the race. He says,

In that moment, all the hardships I had ever faced in the past flashed before my eyes. This was the catharsis I had needed. In that moment I swore to myself I would not let anyone (or anything) come in the way of my *future*^[7].

The success story of Milkha Singh can't be imagined without sacrifice of many things in his life such as he renounced all pleasures and distractions and dedicated his life to the ground with a rule to avoid any close relationship with the opposite sex. He said, running had thus become my God, my religion and my beloved...My only focus was to become the best athlete in the world^[8]. Singh's first meeting with Abdul Khaliq, the then famous Pakistani sprinter was not pleasant as he greeted Singh in an unpleasant manner. He said, I have met and run races with many a Tom, Dick and Harry like him. They are no match for me^[9]. Abdul Khaliq's rudeness is a matter of amazement for Milkha Singh because he never thought of hostility and going far from traditional norms of courtesy and *tameez*. Singh believes such incidents enhanced his confidence to run and win the races. He won race while setting a record for Asia and become the Aisa's best athlete defeating Abdul Khaliq where he thought of reminding him of his words of superiority. When Singh met Pandit Jawaharlal the then Prime Minister of India he narrated the story of his

past and the tragedy of losing most of his family during Partition on this he responded as,

I cannot change the past nor bring the dead back to life, but remember my boy, you are not an orphan. I, and many Indians my age, are your father and mother. If you are even in need of anything, you must come to me^[10].

Singh acknowledges the persons who supported and stood for him in his difficult times and has contributed in his life. After winning the Commonwealth Games Singh become an international sports celebrity. He had received numerous invitations from different countries and travelled throughout the world. He participated in at least eighty international races out of which won seventy-seven. The most special victory for Singh is Indo-Pak Sports Meet in which the President of Pakistan, General Ayub Khan confer the title 'Flying Sikh' on him which later become synonymous with his name all over the world. After he won the race the loudspeakers announced as,

The athlete running before you is Milkha Singh. He does not run, he flies! His victory will be recorded in Pakistan's sports' history, and we confer the title of 'Flying Sikh' on him^[11].

According to Milkha Singh, there are only two incidents that still haunt him- the massacre of his family during Partition and his defeat at Rome. Apart from these two incidents he was contented in his personal and professional life. Though there are some interesting twists and turns personal life he fought marry his lady love, Nimmi. Despite the on-field and off-field drama in his life he remained committed to running. He always wanted to an Indian runner win back the Olympic medal that slipped away from his hand. He worked more than thirty years in the sports department and has initiated several projects to promote and improve the quality of sports throughout India. He visited several countries in order to offer suggestions to the government in terms of the sports and has tried genuinely to flourish sports in India. Being an athlete, he has some serious concerns towards the politics of sports in India. For him, cricket has overshadowed every other sport in India. According to him, life as a sportsperson is hard, and there will certainly be times when you might be tempted to quit, or take shortcuts- but remember there are no shortcuts to success^[12].

Conclusion

To be more precise, he lived a miserable life till joining the army but after that he had successful career as a world class sprinter, lived a happy married life, has been an amazing journey as a proud husband, father and grandfather. The Milkha Charitable Trust in Chandigarh started by Milkha Singh and his wife, Nimmi provides humanitarian services to the poor and needy, particularly penniless sports people and their families.

References

1. Singh, Milkha. *The Race of My Life: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 2013. P. I. Print.
2. ---. Pp.9-10. Print.
3. ---. Pp.12-13. Print.
4. ---. P.18. Print.
5. ---. P.25. Print.
6. ---. P.28. Print.

7. ---. P.37. Print.
8. ---. Pp.47-48. Print.
9. ---. P.57. Print.
10. ---. P.65. Print.
11. ---. P.83. Print.
12. ---. P.150. Print.
13. <https://www.anuradhagoyal.com/book-review-the-race-of-my-life-by-milkha-singh/> October 15, 2013.
14. <https://passey.info/2013/09/haramzadon-bhaago-review-of-the-race-of-my-life/> 14 September 2013.