

# The race is the reward: story of Ashish Kasodekar



Ultramarathon runner Ashish Kasodekar during the Ultra Dynamo marathon

Pranjal Nangare

“The journey started with different activities. I started celebrating different days, like, whenever we had special days like 11/11/11. And in 2012, we had 12/12/12. So, I decided if I am celebrating, why not do something for myself.”

With an idea so inimitable, Mr Ashish Kasodekar started his journey onto the tracks of marathoning. He hails from the city of Pune and thrives on adventure. Today he has moved miles ahead, including the La- Ultra Marathon of 555

km in Ladakh, to make it the first and only Indian to enter the ultra-dynamo category in the Guinness Book of World Records.

When asked what motivated him to accomplish such feats, he said, “We always do something where we expect something, that we might get some certificate or some money.

But I believe you have to do some activity where the answer should be happiness. And I kept on doing that.” Mr Kasodekar has scaled the height of

Everest by climbing the Sinhagad Fort 16 times non-stop aka everesting. From the 28th of November 2021 to the 26th of January 2022, he completed the challenge he undertook to run 60 full marathons in 60 consecutive days.

Mr Ashish firmly believes it is all a mental game of how much you can push yourself. He has not stopped at that but is giving it back to the city also. He organizes marathons for kids from the ages of 6-14 in various places in Pune, according to him marathoning is an activity where everyone wins.

**“When you do things for yourself, it becomes easy, but when you do things for others, it becomes difficult.”**

He says that this feeling of accomplishment brings you to the race. His commitment and passion in his arena indeed leave one inspired.

## Close encounter with a silent communicator

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I point to the store and ask her in gestures how long she has worked here. She holds up six fingers. She understood perfectly. Does she like working here? Her response is a big smile. Her ability to interpret precisely what you are asking is uncanny.

Supriya was not born hearing and speech impaired. When she was 3 years old, she developed a high fever and no medicine worked. Overnight, she lost her hearing and speaking ability. Her world turned silent, but she was determined she would not be left out.

Born and brought up in Pune, Supriya completed her under-graduation in Bachelors of Arts. She has been working for six years now. On being asked about where and how she learnt sign language, she explained that she grew up with friends and acquaintances who had the same impairment.

She learnt sign language from them and advanced her skills by watching YouTube videos. “My greatest support system is my sister and mother,” she mentioned.

Many speech and hearing impaired persons struggle to learn sign language. They also struggle to find equal opportunities in workplaces. The empowerment and encouragement of the community at workplaces is the way forward.

## The quaint bookstore

Contd. from Pg1

Their oldest customer is an 86-year old lady, an avid reader and a regular member.

The USP for the store is its old-world charm and pocket-friendly prices. Stating how different his store is from the branded corporate conglomerates, Kothari said, “Our store caters to people’s attraction towards books. The search here for the required books is an experience, like a treasure hunt. We don’t have an air-conditioned ambience but have great appreciation for literature.” Previously-owned books have a charm of their own. Here one finds novel information and gets the feel of sharing knowledge with the previous owner. Most volumes here are usually donations from first-generation readers, graduating college students, migrating families, and even public libraries. Having been around for more than a decade, Kothari explained how the internet has changed people’s buying habits of the years. He said, “Customers come to me with a list of Top 10 books on Google and purchase them but are unable to finish even one of them.” He believes that it is important for people to start with the basics. “People need to start with Chetan Bhagat to gain confidence in their reading abilities, and then progress to books like Sapiens and Pax Indica,” he advises.

The charm of this store is that the owner doesn’t undermine the value of any book. For critics, certain authors and their writings take precedent over the others,

often being classified as being “worthy of people’s time”. But this second-hand bookstore believes in instilling a love for all books in their customers and build their reading abilities. It is this ethos that helps Kothari connect with readers. It is this association that helps spread word about the store.

Books that are usually not in demand are discarded annually and sent for recycling. Using a metaphor to describe the same, Kothari said, “The process is like that of an almond tree where older leaves fall to make space for the newer ones. Similarly, the older books must be discarded for the new ones.” His journey started many years back with selling a copy of The Sky is Falling by Sidney Sheldon. It has now become his livelihood. Today, his bookstore has approximately 20,000 books.

### Delightful discovery; prized possession

On my first visit to the store I purchased a second-hand copy of Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code. As I flipped open the cover, the first page of the book had a name inscribed on it – Sutanu Gupta. I was astonished and delighted. The erstwhile owner of the book had been a Professor in my college! The second-hand book had suddenly become a prized possession for me. Ultimately, the bookseller was right; all one needs is a connection, and I found mine through this book.

## The boy who grew veggies to fend for his family

Aditi Chavan

The pandemic and the lockdown has produced many unlikely success stories. One such is of a 17-year old boy, Akshay Hajare, who refused to give in to grim circumstances and stood to fend for his family.

Akshay lost his father two years back when he was barely 15. His father had been the sole bread-earner for the family. His mother, who had been a housewife, was forced to work as a housemaid to made ends meet and feed her two children.

Living in a rented house in Ravet near Pune, it fell upon Akshay to take up part-time odd jobs to supplement the family income. But even those jobs vanished as the pandemic struck and lockdown was imposed.

That is when he decided to use the empty plot of land next to their house to grow vegetables. He had been growing some flowers and fruits here. He divided the small piece of land into eight compartments and started growing tomatoes, onions, cluster beans, coriander, brinjal, dill, fenugreek and okra. It was hard work. But his love for farming spurred him on.

The vegetables not only brought in much needed money, but also supplemented the family’s food supplies.