

Make it Happen

By setting your heart on something, you can achieve the impossible. **Sangeeta Shankaran Sumesh** shares her journey in writing a maiden book

Just before my 40th birthday, I gifted myself two things. The first was to complete an Olympic-level triathlon, which includes 1.5 km of open-water swimming, 40 km of cycling and a 10-km run. Having never been an active sports person, not even during childhood, this was a big personal achievement for me! The second gift was a solo holiday in Europe.

I revelled in the euphoria for a few months, but then started to wonder what my next target should be in terms of exploring new territories. Just then, I happened to visit Cambodia on a family vacation, and things took an unexpected turn. There and then, I decided that I would write a book – and since I love stories, that it would have to be a work of fiction. Although I set a time frame of publishing the book before I turned 45, I achieved my goal, rather unexpectedly, two-and-a-half years early!

Drawing inspiration from everywhere

My trip to Cambodia moved me deeply. The many horror stories I heard about the genocide of millions of innocent people in the ‘killing fields’ left a profound mark. The sheer number of skulls and bones on display triggered my thought process, and focused my thinking on the consequences of such violent deeds. It also gave rise to my book, *A Glance at the Unknown*, which is a work of pure fiction. Using my imagination, I weaved a ‘story with a message’ that gets readers thinking.

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It was only around Christmas time two years ago – a full nine months after my visit to Cambodia – that I started writing. What held me back was apprehension: how would people see me as an author? However, thanks to encouraging words from friends and family, and, no small amount of constant self-motivation, I began my journey down this road.

Until I started writing, I did not know there was a story-teller in me. Yet, like many budding authors, after a couple of weekends of intensive effort, I got tied up with my ‘regular work’ and started to procrastinate. Although I was itching to complete the story I had begun, I never managed to catch the time to do so. As time passed, I had

almost forgotten about my story, and even the names of the characters started to fade. In the back of my mind, the guilty feeling of starting something and not completing it bothered me – but at the same time, I was caught up in the vortex of routine.

Seize the opportunity

Last November, to my good fortune, I chanced upon a hundred-day book-authoring challenge that got me back into action. I realised I had to take up this challenge, because nothing helps like a deadline to achieve targets that might otherwise remain only a distant dream. After taking this upon myself, I realised that, although I supposedly had a hundred days in hand, in effect there were just about sixty days available to complete the writing. The remaining time was meant for editing, cover design, printing, and other such tasks. I wondered how I would manage to complete it, but also told myself that I must succeed. Being hard-pressed for time, but gritty and passionate about my story, I devised simple mechanisms like multi-tasking to complete the task.

Be disciplined

Each morning, during my daily walk or jog, I would frame the plot step by step in my mind and try to pen it down before going to bed. Also, every weekend, I would dedicate a few hours exclusively to writing. Sure enough, on the hundredth day – March 6th 2017 to



be specific – my book got launched by The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) in Chennai.

Looking back on the entire journey, I realise that the writing itself was the easiest part of the job. The tougher aspects were the multiple rounds of editing and cover design, and so much more. I also had a tough time narrowing down on the title from the umpteen options I had before me. Being my maiden attempt at a book, I also circulated the draft version to some of my friends to see how they perceived the story. The words of encouragement from my 'beta readers' gave me much-needed confidence to proceed with actually publishing the book.

In the end, everything is possible

I often wonder why certain things in life happen the way they do. At times, there are no obvious answers – and often, events can be baseless, meaningless, or even defy logic. This thought went around my mind

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for a while before finding form in this work of fiction. *A Glance at the Unknown* is purely my interpretation of why life can be so enigmatic. I have tried to provide a glimpse of what I think the unknown is, and this is my perception of the many factors that are dormant in our lives. Intertwined in the story are murder, rape, extra-marital affairs, treachery and tragedy, deeds and consequences, but also mystery, spirituality, and clairvoyance. The

entire drill of writing this book has driven home many truths about life: that there is always an invisible truth; that we alone are responsible for leading ourselves towards inner peace. And, most importantly, that if we set our hearts on anything, the sky really is the limit. At the same time, there were lessons learnt. It was exciting to have discovered that there's an author in me! It gave me a high to note that, through better planning and good time-management skills, I could successfully complete the hundred day book authoring challenge. I also learnt the nitty-gritties of getting to publish a book, and, the fine art of prioritisation. ■



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