



**MAKE YOURSELF
STRONGER
THAN YOUR
EXCUSES.**

DEVENDER PAL SINGH



THE BLADE RUNNER

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Major D.P. Singh is a retired officer of the Indian Army. He is a Kargil War veteran and is known as the India's first blade runner. After his amputation, he gradually started running using a prosthetic limb and has run in 26 half marathons in his running career. In 2018, Govt of India, Ministry of social justice and empowerment conferred him with National award for persons with disabilities under Role model category. In 2019 he was conferred with coveted civilian award, CavinKare Ability Mastery award in recognition of excellence achieved against all odds. In 2019, he wrote another chapter in history when he became the 1st solo Skydiver among persons with disabilities in whole Asia.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

Major Devender Pal Singh was the first blade runner of India. He was born on 13 September 1973 in Jagadhri, Haryana, and commissioned into the 7th Battalion of the Dogra Regiment of the Indian Army in 1997. In the Kargil War of 1999, he was seriously injured by a mortar, leading to the amputation of part of his right leg. Today he is a marathon runner and motivational speaker, and runs an NGO that helps differently abled people. This is the story of his journey through trauma to victory.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

The army had always been a part of Major Singh's life, right from his childhood the cantonment town of Roorkee where his father worked with the general reserve engineering forces. He studied in the Kendriya Vidyalaya. Growing up, his dream was to join the army and build a career in that field. He failed Class 11, failed the National Defence Academy exam not once but twice, and only cleared the Combined Defence Services exam on his second attempt. Through all of this, he never gave up. He completed his graduation through distance learning, and after clearing the Combined Defence Services exam, he was sent to train in Hyderabad.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

In December 1997, Singh graduated from the Indian Military Academy, and received his commission to join the 7th Battalion of the Dogra Regiment. In January of the following year, Singh joined his unit. Two months later, they were posted near the Line of Control in the Akhnoor region of Jammu and Kashmir. The Akhnoor region happens to be a strategic area for the army, with the Line of Control running through the Munawar Tawi River. This region had been especially active during previous wars against Pakistan in both 1965 and 1971. Singh was a dynamic officer, and the same year was promoted to the rank of Major, at the young age of 25.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

In the summer of 1999, during the Kargil War, Major Singh was commanding a post in that same region, close to the Line of Control. Some distance away was a rival Pakistani Army post. During the conflict, an explosion occurred 1.5 metres from Singh. He lost consciousness due to the injuries from the shrapnel, and was carried off the field. In the army hospital, the surgeons initially declared him dead. However, he regained consciousness, and the doctors began work to try and save him. There were over forty pieces of shrapnel embedded all over his body, his stomach would need multiple operations, and being so close to the explosion had left him partially deaf; but the worst was his right leg. Gangrene had set in, and soon it was clear that the leg could not be saved, and amputation was necessary.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

A month-and-a-half after the accident, Singh was still in intensive care. He had lost a lot of weight, and his recovery was slow and unstable because of the number of procedures he had gone through. But he never gave up. Years later, Singh said that he believed that if he had given up then, it would all have been over. Instead, he decided to see this as another challenge, another obstacle in his life, and just like he overcame previous challenges with his willpower and hard work, he would do the same now. It was like being a child again and learning how to walk—except this time, he had to do it with only one leg. First with a crutch (stick), then with a prosthetic leg, Singh taught his body to sit, stand, walk, lie down, get up—he learned to live again.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

Having faced the struggle of being a differently abled person, Singh decided that the best way to bring about change in the environment was to empower the differently abled themselves. With that in mind, he began training for a marathon. In 2009, Singh ran his first half-marathon in Delhi. It was a huge challenge, running a marathon with a prosthetic leg, but he completed it, and returned twice more over the following years. In 2011, with help from the Army, Singh received a blade prosthetic, which helped him tremendously in his running, and earned him the title, 'India's Blade Runner'.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

Singh has admitted that he is often still in tremendous amounts of pain. Fitting his prosthetic usually takes at least an hour and a half, so in order to go running at five in the morning, often he needs to wake up at three to start getting ready. Running with the blade frequently leaves him feeling battered (injured) and bruised (injury marks), since each step sends a jarring impact up his body. While he runs, adrenaline takes over and he does not feel the pain; it is only after he stops that he is reminded of the struggle he faces.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

In 2011, Major Singh also started a support group for amputees called the **CHALLENGING ONES**. The purpose of the group was to encourage amputees like him to rise above their disability, and to help change society's perception of and attitude towards differently abled people through sports. Singh strongly advocated that not only would this change people's attitudes, but it would help boost the confidence of the differently abled. They called themselves the 'Challengers', since they believed they were not 'physically challenged', but were in fact challenging the world. Today, The Challenging Ones has a membership of over 1650 amputees, and have helped more than 1000 amputees to participate in various marathons across the country.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

More recently, Major Singh came up with a new initiative, a (Swachh Ability Run' combining running with a cleanliness drive. This was an event which had both differently abled runners as well as students taking part in 3-km and 10-km runs in seven different cities• Veteran runners and Students would participate for free, and then help with the cleanliness drive upon completion of their run. Local students, especially, Were encouraged to take part in this event. His idea behind this was to Promote inclusion Of differently abled persons as equals, and encouraging them and giving them a platform to prove that they are in no way less able.

LESSON- DEVENDER PAL SINGH

Singh also travels as a motivational speaker, sharing his story with the world. In an interview, he said that the 'main teaching is correcting the person's attitude towards himself and the world. It should move from negativity towards positivity. You cannot motivate anybody for their own individual challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. The biggest pill is positivity.'

From being seriously injured in the 1999 Kargil War to becoming India's first amputee marathon runner when he ran the Delhi Half Marathon in 2009, Singh has run in over 25 marathons all over the world in his running career, and is a Limca Book of Records holder. His injuries could, and probably should, have been the end of his life, but he chose not to let that stop him. Major Devender Pal Singh started out as an inspiration to amputees, but today is a celebrated example of determination and willpower to people all around the world.