



PIC: K RAJESH KUMAR

Ravinder Singh is one of the biggest mass-market selling authors in India now. His sincere and deeply-felt childhood memoir, 'Like It Happened Yesterday', has just been released

by Shevlin Sebastian

At 4 am, on February 9, 2007, Khushi was in a happy mood. She had just completed her last day of work at the IT company that she worked for, in Noida, and was returning home in a cab. On Valentine's Day, February 14, she would be getting engaged to IT professional Ravinder Singh. They had met through the matrimonial website, shaadi.com, and had been going steady for a few months.

While she was sunk in these pleasant thoughts, a truck came and hit the cab at full speed. The car was damaged beyond repair. A grievously wounded Khushi was rushed to the Intensive Care Unit of Escorts hospital, Faridabad, and later, to Apollo, Delhi, where she remained for a fortnight.

"During that time, I was telling God that this is the time I needed Him badly," says Ravinder. Unfortunately, God did not hear his pleas and Khushi died of her injuries. Not surprisingly, Ravinder lost his faith and walked away from God.

Three months passed. Ravinder was unable to come to terms with what had happened. "I could feel this pressure growing inside me," he says. "I wanted to do something. At times, I would cry at night."

At that time, he was living with a friend, in Bhubaneswar, who happened to be reading a book. Ravinder flipped a few pages, and decided that he would try some writing himself. "The idea was to share my grief," he says.

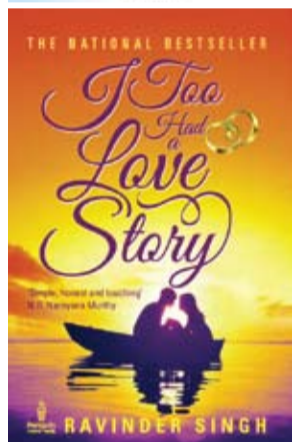
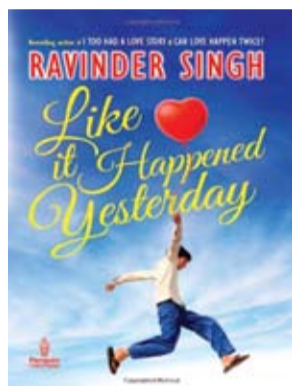
Ravinder started writing... and never stopped. The end result was a book called 'I Too Had a Love Story', which took the youngsters in the country by storm, and sold lakhs of copies.

Ravinder is perceptive about the success of his first book. "Most probably it was because of the honesty with which it was written," he says. "Readers tell me that they felt an emotional connect with the hero. They also felt his pain. My fans told me they don't read my

books because of my literary skills or high standard of English. They like my writing because it is from the heart."

His next two books - 'Can Love Happen Twice?' and 'Love Stories that Touched my Heart' (an anthology) did equally well.

His readership, which was initially young, has now moved to all age groups. "Lots of kids, who read my books, have made



## STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

their parents read it," says Ravinder. "I have received e-mails from grandmothers who told me that in this present world, a guy showing a commitment to somebody who is no longer alive touches them a lot. That pushed them to read the book."

Amazingly, it has healed marital rifts. A woman, Snehalata Rajeev (name changed), said her husband, Surya, had gifted her, 'I Too Had a Love Story', but she never read it. She was having tensions with him, and was contemplating divorce. That was when a friend told her to read Ravinder's book. Snehalata told her friend, "What is the connection between reading this book and saving my marriage?"

But eventually she read the book. "After I finished it, I imagined what if my better half was no more in this world," says Snehalata. "You can never ever get in touch with him ever. By thinking about divorce, was I taking the right decision?" In the end, Snehalata remained with Surya. And a gratified Ravinder says, "This is the best compliment that I have received. It is beyond the price of the book."

Like Snehalata, the fan base keeps growing. When Ravinder set up an e-mail id, itoohadalovestory@gmail.com, he received more than one lakh mails. He also has 6 lakh fans and readers on Facebook.

One woman who read his first book was the Delhi-

based Khushboo Chauhan. "She was probably crying after she read it," says Ravinder. Thereafter, she went to the Bangla Sahib gurudwara and prayed to God. "This guy deserves a nice girl," she said. "So please, God, find him a nice girl." And Khushboo probably could not have imagined that it would be she who would be the 'nice girl', who got married to Ravinder, on September, 23, 2012.

Ravinder was in Kochi recently to promote his latest book, 'Like It Happened Yesterday'. These are touching stories from his childhood, again written with intense feeling and sincerity. Asked why the move from romance to sentimental memories, Ravinder says, "I wanted to

relieve those childhood days one more time. Practically I can't, so theoretically I did."

Observing the excited reaction, among the audience, comprising many youngsters, there is a strong likelihood that 'Like It Happened Yesterday' is also going to be a mega best-seller.

The son of a Sikh priest, Ravinder was born at Kolkata, brought up in a small town, Burla, in Orissa, did his engineering studies from Bidar, Karnataka and MBA from Hyderabad, and began his career in the IT industry from Pune.

From IT industry to best-selling writer is a leap that Ravinder would never have dreamt he would be doing one day.

## An Accidental Actor

Ranvir Shorey, who has been part of around 31 movies, talks about comedy and first time filmmakers

by Mrinalini Sundar

Not many know that before becoming an actor, Ranvir Shorey was an assistant director on the small screen. However, the sometime VJ and director was appreciated the most for his role as a Delhi guy in Khosla Ka Ghosla. Though he had no intention of playing a character from Delhi once again, Shorey, 40, says he could not say no to director Shashant Shah and his Bajatey Raho. After completing around 31 movies, he hopes his role Balwant in Bajatey Raho will be recognised.

A young dad - his son with wife Konkona Sen Sharma is two years old - he talks about comedy and first time filmmakers.

What kind of scripts have you received in the past year?

Honestly, there aren't enough good scripts that come to me, nor great parts. I have to choose the best of what is offered to me to survive. I'm an accidental actor. I didn't come into the business to be an actor or a 'hero'. I've set targets for myself as I go along. I want to keep doing that. That keeps me from being unhappy.

What is the difference between being an actor and a star?

I guess the difference is mass appeal. It's for people to decide what I am. I'm too busy making a living out of what I love doing. And that is a true blessing.

Tell us about your role in Bajatey Raho?

My character in the film, Balwant, is the protagonist's childhood buddy, who's helping him when his family is going through hard times. He's a Punjabi parking lot owner in Delhi with a short temper but a heart of gold, and a penchant for quick repartee. The movie treads the middle path of being an offbeat film with mainstream appeal. It's the kind of sensibility that I subscribe to whole heartedly, at least in mainstream cinema.

Yet another movie with Vinay Pathak.

Vinay and I have a 15-year work association and a strong friendship, so whenever I work with him, I'm immediately at ease and comfortable. We also share a common sensibility in the kind of work we do.

What made you accept this project?

The director, Shashant Shah. We've worked together in television on many shows, including The Great Indian

Comedy Show, and he's a dear friend. He's a very talented filmmaker with a great flair for comedy (and dance).

Are you being offered only comedies?

I'm offered mostly comedies because that's what I've mostly been successful at. It's the nature of this business. But I believe I have managed to steer clear of being typecast by doing different roles in films like Traffic Signal, Mithya etc, and by sitting at home a lot! Frankly, I would rather quit than be put in a mould.

Tell us about the directors you will like to work with?

There's a whole lot of successful directors I'm dying to work with, but I need good parts. I'm tired of being offered bit roles by filmmakers even after considerable success in a number of films. My career today stands on the work I've done thanks to first-time filmmakers, and those are the directors I'd like to continue working with.



## CRUISE WEDDING FOR BRANGELINA?



Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are reportedly weighing the options of getting married on a ship. The couple was seen enquiring about the Hebridean Princess, a ship sailing the waters off Scotland.

Earlier, the plans were to wed at the French chateau but the power couple seem to have changed their mind due to son Maddox, reports thesun.co.uk.

"It was Maddox who came up with the idea of the ship. He came across it after looking back at photos of the Carnell Estate in Ayrshire where they stayed... So now they've made enquiries into booking the whole vessel," Bizarre magazine quoted a source as

saying.

Wedding on the ship can allow the couple to maintain privacy. "It's just what they're after. It can hold up to 50 of their friends and family and serve as a traditional, romantic setting - all totally private," a source said.

"Or they could always sail to a secluded bay off the Orkney or Shetland islands and have the ceremony there. The kids are all hooked on old British voyages, so they would love it. The fact that Maddox found it makes it more special," a source added.



## Sonam's First Love

Sonam Kapoor, who had assisted Sanjay Leela Bhansali in Black, says direction is her first love and acting came as a mistress.

"Yes, my first dream was to be a director. I love reading, I love movies, and stories. It's because of that I always wanted to direct," Sonam says.

"You get attached to the fame and glamour and I am attached to it. I won't lie about it. That was my first love, but then acting came as a mistress," adds the actress who has been acting in front of the camera for the past six years.

In future, she has definite plans to go behind the camera to tell her kind of stories. "Yes, I will direct films in future, but right now I want to focus on acting. It's too early to talk about direction right now," says the 28-year-old.

Recently, the actress has been part of two back-to-back successful films Raanjhanaa and Bhaag Milkha Bhaag and is "happy" with the kind of films that are coming her way. "And if nothing else, at the risk of sounding extremely spoilt, I have my sister (Rhea who produced 'Aisha') to make movies for me." IANS

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