



Participation Matters

By Rohini Chintha

“So, which event are you going to take part in on Sports Day?” asked Mom eagerly.

“I won’t be taking part in any event. In fact, I won’t even be going for the Sports Day,” said Monu.

Grandpa looked up from his newspaper. “But why?” he asked Monu.

“I am not good at any sport. And no matter how hard I try, I am not going to win, so what is the point of participating?” said Monu.

"You don't participate to win. You participate to have fun," said Grandpa. "Did you know Japan gives medals to the participants who are not winners? They do so because they believe participation is as important as winning."

Monu looked up in disbelief.

"By the way, what games are there on your Sports Day?" asked Grandpa.

"There will be swimming, badminton, basketball, gymnastics and

long jump events, along with the 100-metre and 200-metre dash, and the 400-metre relay," replied Monu.

"Given a chance to win, which one would you like to participate in?" probed Grandpa.

Monu thought for a while and said, "The 100-metre and 200-metre running races."

"What is stopping you?" asked Grandpa.

"I don't have any practice. Even if I start now, I hate waking up early for the training sessions, and the physical strain would be too much to handle," said Monu making excuses. "And, Sports Day is in ten days. There isn't even a proper ground in the neighbourhood to run."

"These are not reasons to not



participate," said Grandpa, brushing aside Monu's protests. "Get your shoes. Let's go to my club and you can practise in the ground there."

Monu tagged behind Grandpa reluctantly. The coach at the club was eager to help Monu. He too shared Grandpa's opinion. "Winning doesn't matter, but participation does," he said.

"Both Grandpa and the coach are of the same opinion. Perhaps, participation is what actually counts," thought Monu to himself. "Anyway, I don't expect to win, so I have nothing to lose," he convinced himself and agreed to practise.

The following week, Monu practised at the club every day. He began enjoying the early morning training sessions; he no longer



"But your Sports Day is over, and you didn't win," smiled Grandpa slyly.

"Winning would have been fun but participating was as much fun too. I loved the excitement of running the race. Now, come on, I need to start practising for next year's Sports Day. Who knows, I might even win," said Monu with a wink.

"You are a true sportsman, Monu," said Grandpa, hugging Monu.

"Thank you for making me one, Grandpa," said Monu. "And thank you for making me realise that participation does matter!" ●

disliked waking up early. He could also see an improvement in his running. Monu's confidence in the running track led him to perform better in class too.

Monu also enjoyed the talks his coach and Grandpa would give to motivate him. Every day, he learnt about someone new like sprinter Milkha Singh and boxer Mary Kom, and the hurdles they overcame to achieve their dreams. Monu found their stories inspiring.

On Sports Day, Monu surprised his friends and teachers by participating in the races. He ran well, but did not win. Monu took the loss sportingly and congratulated the winners.

In the evening, Grandpa was reading his newspaper when Monu came over.

"Come on, Grandpa. Let's go to the club and practise," said Monu enthusiastically.

