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Awakening the inner coach

KALYAN ASHOK

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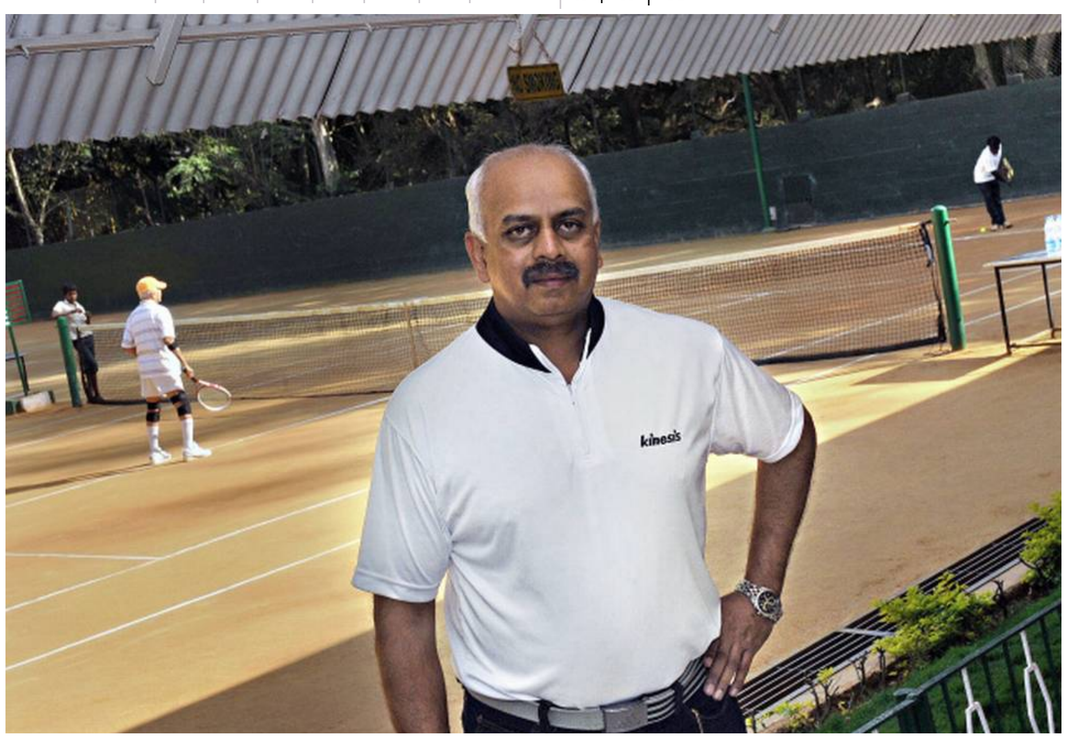

PLAY IT AGAIN Krishna Kumar: 'Tennis was my hobby, but I thought, why not use my corporate skills in the sport and make it better?' Photos: Bhagya Prakash K.

Corporate trainer and tennis coach, M.M. Krishna Kumar tells Kalyan Ashok that using the tools and techniques of sports coaching helps improve performance in one's chosen sphere

An innovative executive trainer, corporate guru and tennis coach, M.M. Krishna Kumar is known for his training techniques. What makes his methods unique is the large dose of sports he injects in them. “From sports, I have taken psychology, behavioural science and experiences that one encounters as a sportsman and applied this to the workplace,” explains Kumar. “This may look very challenging, but it has produced tremendous results.”

“In the corporate world, setting and attaining goals is usually the mantra and executive coaching is basically all about improving core performance in one's chosen sphere, and using tools and techniques of sports coaching in such training has given good results,” he says.

Kumar's methods are based on work done by a noted tennis coach, Tim Gallaway, who evolved a concept called the “Inner Game”. “The gist of Gallaway's treatise was simple. You master the inner game and gain self-mastery, the outer game in any sphere becomes an easy task. I have fused this concept along with my own experiences in sports field as a tennis coach and in the corporate world to create my programme, which I call ‘inner coach methodology.’”

In the corporate world, some seek promotions and others look to enhance their selling prowess, while many wish to develop winning business strategies. Kumar explains the training process. “Suppose a person seeks a promotion. We try and analyse what it takes to achieve that. Whether he is lacking in presentation, interpersonal relationships or being a good team player. We identify the area which he needs to focus on and then sit with him and work on those goals with time-bound targets. We don't teach, we only pull out the inherent talent.”

Though a person often achieves his short-term goals, he tends to lose focus on the larger picture of life, feels Kumar. He cites the example of Abhinav Bindra, the shooting ace who fetched India's first ever Olympic Gold in 2008. “Bindra in his autobiography says that after reaching what seemed an ultimate goal, he went through a phase where life seemed to lack purpose and he was actually drifting from one award ceremony to the other. This is where a coach's role becomes imperative. As coaches, we never let that happen and help the trainee discover, in his own way, the larger purpose in life and break that into short goals and guide him to achieve that.”

“Whatever may be one's vocation, he or she should be a leader and not a follower.” Kumar feels every human being has the potential to become a leader with good life skills training.

Kumar has lost count of the number of people he has trained, but he has logged in over 1,000 hours, he says. He will soon be on the board of governors of the prestigious International Association of Coaches and he is also the founder member of the International Coaching Professionals Association.

Tennis is Kumar's other passion. Why does a highly qualified technocrat with MBA and IIT degrees turn to sports? “Tennis was my hobby, but I thought, why not use my corporate skills in the sport and make it better?” His Kinesis Tennis Academy is a unique professional body based on corporate ideology and ethics and meets ISO norms

“Professionalism is the need of the hour in tennis coaching in India, as even a marker can call himself a coach. That's why we created the Kinesis Coaching Certification programme, where only those with passion for the game, sound educational background and proven skills take up the course and become well-qualified professional coaches. We keep motivating our coaches.”

His family is also into sports and education. His wife, Nirmala, is a child development specialist, while son Nitin, who is in Singapore, does part-time coaching in tennis and daughter Uttara, in high school now, plays at State-level and AITA events.

If you ask him about his hobbies, he laughs, “Hobbies are for those who work. My work is my play and my play is my work.”

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