

I was born to be a boxer – Shiva Thapa



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Nanda Kirati Dewan 13 June 2009 51212 views

He played soccer like any other next door guy, cricket never could fascinate him and barely at 7 he donned the boxing gloves that brought international gold medal for the nation and glory for the 16 years old boxer from Assam. Promising young Indian boxer Shiva Thapa in an exclusive interview with Nanda Kirati Dewan at his Birubari residence in Guwahati spoke his heart out. In a reply to a question “If not a boxer What would Shiva Thapa be?”..... After a pause with a sweet innocent smile “Sir, I was born to be a Boxer.” Recently Shiva won a bronze medal at the World Junior Boxing Championship in Armenia. Here are the excerpts of interview

NKD: Shiva, Congratulations for the laurels you brought for the nation and state!

Shiva: Its my pleasure and I m really honoured. Thank You Sir.

NKD: Shiva be formal.... No more Sir OK.

Shiva: No Sir.... I am OK.

NKD: But I m not OK dear ... Shiva how did boxing happen?

Shiva. Initially like any other next-door guy I too played soccer and I need to admit that I was good with soccer too. Later at one staged I tried myself with taekwondo also and I excelled in it too. But finally under my father I took up an individual game as my brother Gobind Thapa is also a boxer. I was only 7 years when I donned the boxing gloves.

NKD: Where were you trained initially?

Shiva: Initially I was trained in this room (We are in the drawing room of Mr. Padam Thapa's residence where medals, citations, trophies, jhapis and other felicitated decorative items were decorated) by my father. I should say that my father Padam Thapa is a cultured sportsman and has this spirit even today. He is first coach. It was he who took me to Sports Authority of India (SAI), Guwahati and got admitted there for nurturing my talent at that time I was barely 7.

NKD: Technically boxing is known to be a power game. How does Shiva generate that power?

Shiva: The concept that boxing as a power game; as a boxer totally disagree with it. Boxing is more a mind game. More than a healthy person an intelligent man with good fitness can take up this game. It is not that the hard hit gets point. Boxing today more than a power is a mind game.

I work out everyday in the gym, go for a morning walk early morning, eat lot of salad and drink adequate water. I avoid junk and oily food. I take a total balanced diet as suggested by my coach and federation. And the best part I practice everyday.

NKD: How do you plan your game in the ring? Not the secrets but the truths that every body has seen you?

Shiva: There is no harm sharing secrets to you because game plan is always very flexible. It differs from game to game and opponent. For instance if my opponent is tall I would prefer to play like a tempo boxer. The best thing is to “Float like a Butterfly and Sting like a Bee” by Mohammad Ali. However my idol is Mike Tyson.

NKD: Then Shiva idolizes Mike Tyson? What do you like about him. How would you react on meeting him?

Shiva: Yes Mike Tyson has been my idol before I donned the boxing gloves. I saw him playing this game on television when I was 6 as my boxer brother used to watch it. I like Tyson’s respect and love for the game. He executes each punch so skillfully that he always tries gaining a point from every punch he blows. His techniques are fabulous I wish I could learn his techniques in future. His will power and fitness is also enviable.

Meeting Tyson would be a part of dream coming true. However my dream and aim is only one to bag a gold medal at the Olympics donning the tri-colour for my country. I would love to meet him in any of the international event or at the 2012 Olympics. On meeting as per a tradition of my nation and Gorkha community I would bow before him and seek his blessing.

NKD: I wish all your dreams comes true. The nation’s blessings and best wishes are always with you.

Shiva: Thank You. I would love to make my countrymen proud and I seek their prayers and blessings. I thank all my country men for their support till date I hope the shower of love and blessing would continue on me till I answer them with a gold medal at the Olympics and even there after....

NKD: What are you doing as of now other than boxing?

Shiva: I am 12th class student in Poona College. Academically too I am not crammer I secured 1st division in my HSLC exam as well I have several times topped my class. Recently I passed my 10+1 exam and enrolled myself 12th std. I stay in Pune and getting trained at Army Sports Institute (ASI), Pune under Mission Olympics. However my interests are 80% on boxing and 20% on studies. I skip lot of classes following my practice session and events. Before my induction into the institute, I learnt to trade punches at the Sports Authority of India centre in Guwahati under coach Amar Deka. While representing the state, I won my first the Sub-Junior Nationals three years ago. It was at the ASI Pune where they selected me for the boys scouts programme,

NKD: You were noticed as a amateur boxer by Assam when bagged Gold in Titabor Jorhat at All Assam Invitational Junior/ Sub Junior tourney in 2004. When was Shiva noticed as a pugilist by the country?

Shiva: It was at the 21st Sub- Junior National Boxing Championship 2005 in Noida UP where I ended up with a gold medal after beating services boxer having very good tract record. It was my first national appearance. Assam recognized me as a boxer the day I joined SAI Guwahati and donned the gloves.

NKD: How does it feel the country recognizing Shiva Thapa as an international boxer whose family has a record of serving the nation in defence?

Shiva: My ancestor has served the nation as defense personnel and I got the opportunity of serving the nation as a pugilists. It really feels proud wrapping the tri-colour standing in front of the globe. My first international appearance for my country was at the Hyder Aliyev Cup at Azarbaizan in Russia in 2008 where I won a gold medal. My country erupted with joy and cheered me. Out of love and encouragement they nicknamed me “SHIVA ALI” after Mohammad Ali-the veteran Indian pugilist.

NKD: How do you feel to be known as a Gorkha of Assam in a national side?

Shiva: Many veteran Gorkhas have palyed for this country. Ace shooter Jaspal Rana, Arjuna awardee Jasral Pradhan, sensational footballer Sunil Chetri to name a few. I am one just Indian citizen. It doesnot make me feel different as a Gorkha but I am proud to have donned the tricolour. I as a Gorkha of Assam have been an integral part composite Assamese society. My community has been a mainstream ethnic community of Assam as I have learnt. Assam applauds my success and encourages me. It is really great feeling. Not only the Gorkhas, people of entire North East have extended huge support for me at the national events. I am pleased to have represented the North East.

NKD: On writing “Gorkhali” as your mother tongue in your International profile?

Shiva: - Everyone knows about an Independent nation Nepal which our closed neighbour. The citizen of Nepal writes Nepali as their citizen and mother tongue. If I use Nepali anywhere in my profile I would go to represent Nepal. My mentors in Pune tell me that Indian constitution recognizes Nepali language as Gorkhali in the constitution so in order to avoid confusion in the international arena I recognize myself as a Gorkha. My grandfather was a Gorkha soldier and I am a Gorkha boxer certainly not Nepali.

NKD: Your happiest moment?

Shiva: To be honest with you. The gold medal at Hyder Aliyev Cup at Baku in Azerbaijan in Russia was my happiest moment. I am the 1st Indian ever till date to have won a gold medal in this tournament. My gold came in the 50kg category against Azerbaijan’s Gurbanzade Saikhan.

NKD: Tell us something about your family?

Shiva: I am the most pampered and youngest in my family. My father by profession a small-scale business man owing small steel furniture shop a leading telecom franchisee in Guwahati. My brother Gobind Thapa is a silver medallist boxer at the 33rd Guwahati National Games. All four of my sisters are very supportive. My mother Goma Thapa is a house wife.

NKD: Apart from boxing what does Shiva love to do in leisure time?

Shiva: I listen to music a lot. I listen scores of English, Nepali, Hindi and Assamese music. I am tuned with music than the lyrics. It energizes me as it gives relaxation after practice. Whenever I have sufficient leisure time I love to swim. I do all activities like any guy of my age does.

NKD: How does this golden boxer handle success?

Shiva: I am never carried away by success. Fame coming by the way of my success is a moral booster. Organisation from different background has felicitated me. I thank them all through you.

NKD: “If not a boxer What would Shiva Thapa be?”

Shiva: After a pause with a sweet innocent smile“Sir, I was born to be a Boxer.”

NKD: Your take on our conversation?

Shiva: Honestly more than interview it was like a chat at my home with a relative. Anyways it was really very pleasant talking to you. Thank you for your efforts to highlight me in your esteemed publication. I look forward for your association in future too.

NKD: Sure Shiva. Thank you for sparing your valuable time with me.

Shiva: Mention not. Lets go for lunch Sir.

NKD: Finally one sentence for budding pugilists..

Shiva: “Float like a Butterfly and Sting like a Bee”

NKD: All the Best for your future Shiva.

Shiva: Thank You Sir.

Thereafter Shiva started packing off his luggage as he was leaving Pune that evening and thereafter to Uzbekistan for two months. He is also all set to play for Assam at the 34th National Games in Jharkhand. He is expected to represent India at the Commonwealth Games in 2010 in New Delhi. The pugilist is confident of booking a ticket to London 2012 Olympics and bring home a gold medal.

Nanda Kirati Dewan

Nanda Kumar Dewan is our Senior Journalist covering Community Development & International Relations. He is a Mass Communication & Journalism graduate from Sikkim Manipal University (SMU). He started his journalism career with UB Photos News agency in 2006 as News Photo Caption Editor and Photojournalist. He has been associated with Assam Times since its inception and today is a part of our editorial team.

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