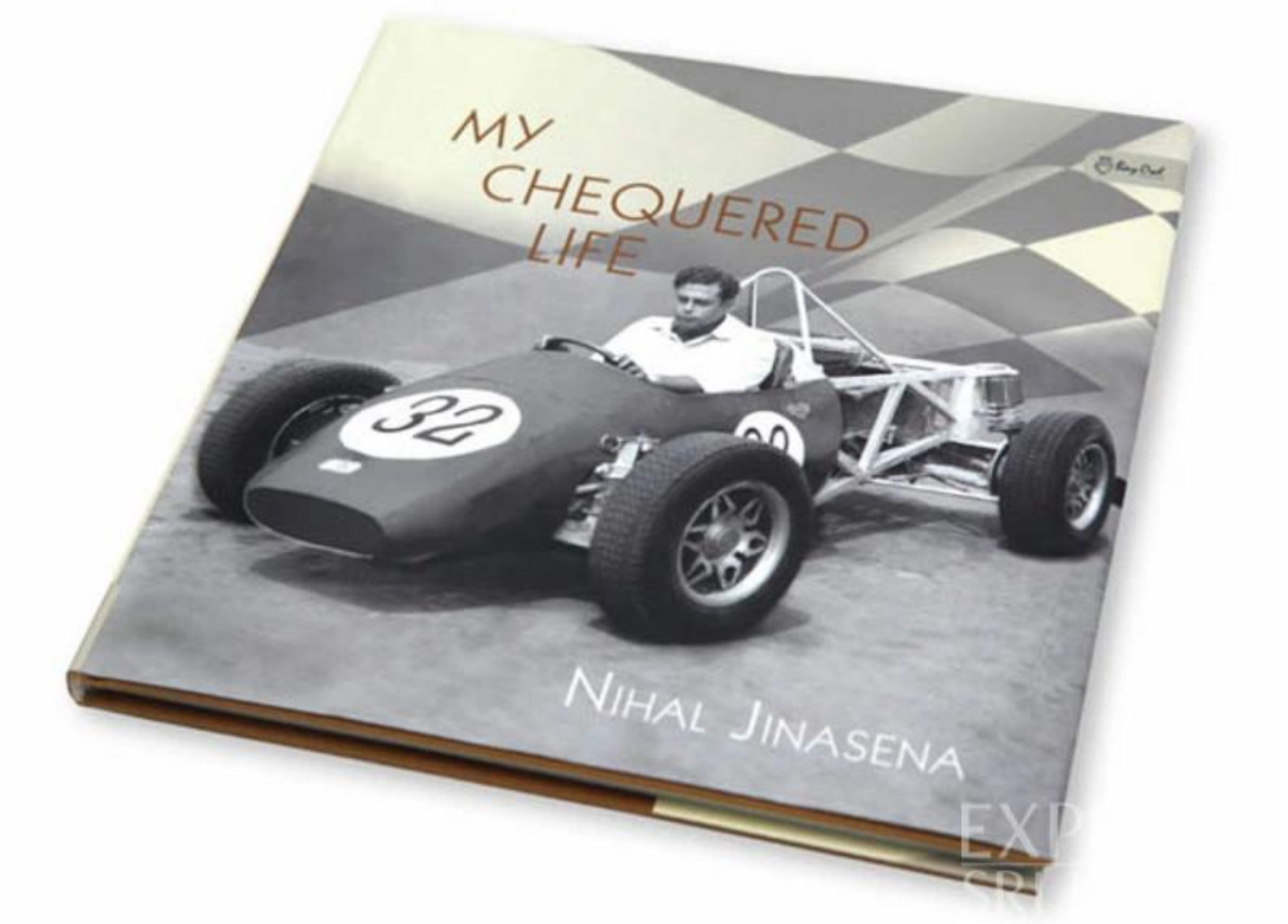
My Chequered Life

Posted on



From the opening line, the voice of the narrator enters your mind. Trials and tribulations conveyed in candid evenness and peppered with humourous anecdotes, the memoir takes the reader through a both, moving and inspiring journey. Author, Nihal Jinasena, one of Sri Lanka's foremost business magnates opens the window to an extraordinary life in 'My Chequered Life'. And it is one of those books that you won't put down till the end.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara

“I felt I’ve had a fairly interesting life,” states Nihal Jinasena as one of the reasons behind penning the memoir—an understatement to anyone who reads My Chequered Life. The story told through each phase of his life, from early childhood through to retirement, the narrative flows easily. It delves with abandon into professional and personal facets where the reader is allowed to trespass. The manner in which the story is broken down, a reader could peruse the book in one sitting or pick a chapter at whim. However, with each progressive chapter, the story unravels as it builds in richness and depth.

Notably both highs and lows are conveyed in equal measure. And in the course of the story, Jinasena, a household name becomes three-dimensional.

In the first chapter, the author resurrects a past that reaches beyond his own childhood. Coloured with quips, old photographs and anecdotes from his parents’ and grandparents’ lives, Nihal Jinasena reveals the legacy behind the name. Consequently each chapter is brought to life, accompanied with photographs that evolve from black and white, to coloured as the story progresses to the present day. One could marvel at the metal of memory that offers vivid detail, right down to names of schoolteachers. It is what draws the reader into a time stamped journey from his days grooming as a mechanical engineer in the UK, his academic highlights to the years following his return to Sri Lanka to take on the family business. His return to the country was prompted by his mother, who urged, “you have seen Ceylon through the eyes of a boy. Why not look at it through the eyes of a man?” Consequently the readers are subject to just that as Jinasena finds there is much awaiting him in ‘Ceylon’.

> The story is told just as it has been lived— unfalteringly

The highs and lows, overcoming numerous obstacles, the nitty-gritty of engineering and developing and diversifying businesses are conveyed evocatively. It allows the reader to experience the daunting journey towards becoming one of the foremost industrial conglomerates in the country. The message to the future generations that success in business can be achieved with integrity and credibility intact, served as another incentive to pen his memoir. “In my entire life, I have never paid a bribe to anyone. We have managed on our own. If we didn’t get any contracts, it didn’t

matter, we went in search of others. Today life in business circles are not very honest," says Nihal Jinasena.

Alongside transforming business into a successful conglomerate, the author relates the key events of his personal life. The personal triumphs and sorrows detailed in the book, add that much more warmth to the story. Incidentally the book begins with a poignant dedication to his son. The term 'Chequered' in the title of the book symbolically represents a 'mixed life' and a love for motor racing. The latter is highlighted oftentimes in the book where motor racing extends far beyond a hobby, but serious business, and even a family tradition. As the author puts it in the chapter dedicated to motor racing "A huge chunk of my life has been devoted to motor racing."

Overall a story of success, discernible in 'My Cequered Life' is a life ventured with passion and tenacity, be it in the running of business or racing cars. And the story is told just as it has been lived —unfalteringly.

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