FINAL NRAI Speech

Good **afternoon**, ladies and gentlemen. **Thank** you for your felicitations… and warm wishes. This is an **emotional** moment for me…  I have come to the **end** of a journey… that has lasted **most** of my life, and at **such** a time, it is customary to look back… and **reflect** on what you have learned. I have taken the **liberty** of putting together a few thoughts… that I’d like to share with you. 

When one’s **whole** life has been dominated by **one** thing, it is **difficult** to give up that one thing. But shooting has taught me **this**: that give up one **must**; give up one **has** to… To get better **tomorrow**, you need to give up the idea of being the best **today** – because **tomorrow**… is **another** day. Many people ask me **why** I am retiring. I have **many** more years left before I need to go, they say. **My** answer… is that it is time to move on, and hand **over** the baton… to the **new** generation. It is time… for **them** to blossom. 

Our shooting team has been an **inspiration…** – to the **thousands** of would-be shooters out there…, but **also** to me. I **thank** them… for their **support** and **encouragement**. It has been an **honour…** to shoot beside them, and I wish them luck in **all** their future endeavours. Their perseverance and hard work… will **always** bear fruit. 

Shooting has developed **enormously** as a sport… since it **first** began to be played in India, but there is **still**… **tremendous** scope for **further** growth. **Likewise**, the National Rifle Association has supported shooters over the years, but there is **still** the scope to be… not just the **best** sports federation in the **country**, but one of the **model** federations… in the **world**. 

I would like to thank **everyone** at the National Rifle Association, but most **especially** the **staff** associated with the shooting family. They have worked **tirelessly** through the years… behind the scenes, with neither **recognition**… nor **applause**, processing **all** the paperwork that has allowed **us** shooters… to shine… on the national and international stage. 

**Thanks** are **also** due… to Mr. **Raninder** Singh, **President** of the Shooting Federation…, under whose leadership… the sport has grown by **leaps** and bounds. **Please** accept my compliments… on your **good** work, and **best** wishes for the future. 

Shooting as a sport could **not** have progressed to the extent it has… without **unstinted** support from the government **and** the Sports Authority of India. For **this**…, my fervent thanks… go out to them. 

**One** afternoon, a **lazy** boy… who wanted an **easy** life… chose shooting as the **easiest** sport available and rejoiced…, because he would **not** need to become **hot** and **sweaty…** like other kids who played other sports. Till he became **hooked** – to the **gun…,** to the **bullseye**…, to the **shooting**. 

It is an **ironic** twist of fate… that I ended up working **harder** than I had **ever** imagined it was possible to work… I **don’t** consider myself the most **talented** person in my sport. My talent lies… in working **hard**. I have **pushed** myself to work **hard…**, and in doing so… I have pushed **you** as well. ☺

I have had the **great** pleasure… and **privilege** of having been the **Olympic** Champion, the **World** Champion, the **Commonwealth** Games Champion, and the **Asian** Games Champion… in my sport. **Last** month at **Rio**, I came in **fourth** and did not win a medal…, but my performance… gave me **great** closure. 

I have been **process**-driven all my life. I know… that I did **everything** possible… at Rio. I put in my **absolute** best. I could have done **nothing** more…, and knowing that… gives me **huge** satisfaction. It is a **wonderful** way to close my career of **two** decades. 

It has been a **fulfilling** journey… that has taught me **many** life lessons, which will **help** me in the future… As I stand on a threshold… of a **new** path, I would like to **share** with you… the **three** qualities… I will carry over… from my shooting career. 

The first is **persistence**. Over the years…, **every** time I’ve failed.., what has kept me **going**… is **persistence**. Whether at **Athens**, where my arc of success… was broken by my **not** winning a medal **despite** breaking the Olympic record, or at various other points in my life…, I have **always** learnt from failure, using it as a **stepping** stone to improvement…, and **success**. It is people who **kept trying** even when there seemed to be **no** hope at all… who have accomplished the **most** important things. If **more** people realised the role of perseverance…, we would see **far** greater achievements chalked up in **every** field. 

The **second** quality I value deeply… is **hard work**. **No** surprises there. ☺ It has been one of the **cornerstones** of my life. “There is **no** substitute for hard work.” The sentiment is **mine**, but the words are those… of the famous American inventor, Thomas **Edison**. 

Lastly…, what**ever** you do, do it with your **heart and soul**. **So** often we do things… **just** because we **have** to do them, and so we do them **unwillingly**, just for the **heck** of it. But if you give your task… **…** you have, **then**, and only **then**, does success become a **real** possibility. 

I have given my **all** to shooting. And I have got **more** than I imagined possible –  mainly because I **stuck** to my guns…, both **literally…**  **and** figuratively.  ☺

Years ago, I was part of an audience… in which thespeaker, after a **rather** short speech…, said…, “The mind can only **absorb**… what the **seat…** can endure.” ☺ **Today**, I would like to extend the **same** consideration to **you**. It has been a **privilege** spending the afternoon with you. I thank you **once** again… for your enthusiastic **support**… and **encouragement**, and wish you… **all** the best for the future. Ladies and gentlemen…, for the **last** time before I hang up my boots…,  **thank you** for listening. 