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For someone who gathered enough confidence to type his debut novel,

Zero Percentile, *Missing IIT Kissing Russia*, only after he got his laptop five years ago, Neeraj Chhibba was quite an introvert. In fact, in his school days his teachers were most surprised when he bagged the "highly commendable" certificate in Class X in an English essay contest organized by the Royal Commonwealth Society. And even though the prize acted as a revelation for him, it was not until he returned to India from Russia and landed a job in a software company in Delhi, that he managed some free time to type his novel.

Relying on his keen observations of his surroundings there, he accepts that he uses "business English" as against high literary English usage to reach out to his target audience. As a writer, he reasons, he has to write about experiences that his readers can relate to and speaks in a



conversational, simple language for common comprehension.

Drawing some slices of daily life in

works submitted by first-time writers." But, even as he reveals this bitter truth, he calls out to aspiring writers, "don't lose heart."

Meanwhile, though his protagonist

'FOR READERS, IN THEIR WORDS'

Volgograd during his stay while pursuing Engineering course there, he also lets his imagination take flight to bridge in the missing links. Not

turning blind to the historical importance of the city, he also delved into anecdotes that happened in the course of his journey to become an active member in his friends' social lives. The Russians' strong belief in values, family system and their love for knowledge are some traits that find mention in his book.

After he finished writing, Neeraj admits that it was not easy for him to get his work published. He says, "most of the publishing houses do not have time to even glance through

finds himself at the receiving end of negative human attitude, he firmly espouses values. This non-preachy attitude shows up in his treatment of the character who contracts AIDS in his novel.

Not one to bask in his glory as his debut novel is already on its way to its second print within two weeks of it being published, he exudes practicality when he states that a publishing house or the final product, including its packaging, can only give you a platform and it is totally up to your creative endeavours to carry on. His optimism also reverberates as he states, "My book has the materials to be made into a good movie!" Hope the sequel to this writer's novel, that is already playing among his grey cells, is as interesting as his first.