

# Barefoot Ted tells a tale of 'super power of simple feet'

V Anand | TNN

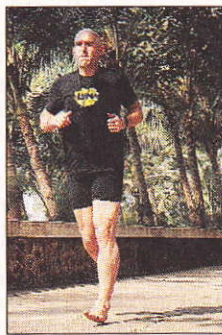
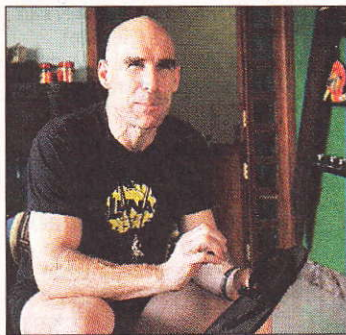
K K Choudhary

**Mumbai:** When the world is sprinting towards more and more "technologically advanced shoes", Ted McDonalds, a running enthusiast from Seattle, condones just the opposite: Go for the minimalist method as less is more.

Barefoot Ted or the Monkey Man, as the Lord Hanuman devotee likes to call himself, is an apostle of barefoot running, advocating the need for going back to the basic form to rid the body of all ailments.

But once upon a time, he also used to run like the "differently abled, those who run in shoes". A decade ago, when a back problem started to ail him, Ted began to try out various shoes, but nothing could offer him relief. When even a pair of branded exercise shoes, worth \$300, could not make any difference, Ted simply ripped them off and walked home barefoot. On reaching, he realized that the trek had been painless. The next day, he tried a barefoot run and it did not hurt him either. This started Ted's journey into the barefoot world.

"Running barefoot is like learning a new language," said Ted, who was in Navi Mumbai on Saturday. After a run in Mumbai on Sunday, he will head for Auroville in Pu-



**ON A RUNNING SPREE:** Ted McDonalds is in the city before he heads for Auroville for a marathon next weekend

ducherry for a marathon next weekend. Allaying the common fear that a man's feet are not made to run on a concrete surface, Ted said, "Wear minimalist shoes or run with your eyes open. When you run barefoot, your heels stay away from the ground and the recoil energy from the bounce that you get by landing on midsole will re-energize you." For him, barefoot running signifies "the next level of development". "People are done with their well-cushioned shoes. Americans are opting for minimalists."

It was Ted who made the Vibram Five Fingers shoes, or foot gloves used by sailors for superior grip on boats, popular among runners after he convinced the makers to design similar footwear for them.

According to Ted, running without shoes on natural sur-

face is more difficult than on a concrete stretch, which has consistency. "A sprint without shoes is like letting your feet come alive. You suddenly realize that your feet read the ground and re-adjust to it. Instead, people wear shoes and put their feet in a cast that has no connect," says Ted.

Going barefoot might be equated to poverty in India, but that is what appeals to Ted. "Less is more," he said. "If you move well, you live well. The poor may not have as much money as the rich but they have fewer ailments than them."

After a round of run in Navi Mumbai, Ted went to a Hanuman temple. "Hanuman can jump, fly and carry mountains on his hands. I connect with him as I have come to earth to remind people of the super powers of simple feet."