

the ICT and rightsizing to increase efficiency and bring transparency, productivity and accountability in the system. Further, this chapter explains the good practices for reforms initiated by the civil society and the public-private collaborations. Although the creation of BATF was a welcome measure in the administrative reforms, its current existence and the sustainability of 'good practices' is in question due to the changed political scenario in the state. The next chapter on urban-local governance reforms in the American cities by Vidu Soni discusses the need for empowerment of frontline employees and lists the likely obstacles while implementing in developing countries that requires an appropriate combination of bottom-up and top-down reform initiatives in best practices.

The fourth chapter by Daljit Singh addresses the lessons learnt in the regulation of Indian power sector through Electricity Regulatory Commissions (ERC) while providing an account of the performance evaluation of these regulatory commissions based on the operational independence, functional independence, accountability and the consumer participation. The chapter notes the need for interactions between regulators and the government and government-owned utilities. The subsequent chapter by Sudha Mahalingam discusses the regulatory experiments in the power sector with an overview of the power sector reforms and the creation of the ERCs. The regulatory experiment is presented with two case studies from Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The limitations of the regulatory process are linked to the good administrative practices, which highlights the need for improving efficiency, accountability, appropriate tariff fixation, etc. The last chapter on power and transport sector reforms by Kuldeep Mathur, brings out the failure of the state in addressing environmental quality issues and the effective intervention of the judiciary to address the pollution problem caused by the industrial and vehicular emissions in New Delhi.

The subsequent chapter is by James Warner Björkman on the practices and imperfections in the health sector reforms. In the light of NPM, Björkman addresses the health sector reforms, with an overview of the types of reforms and suggests strategies for reforming the health sector. A key aspect is the grassroots-centred approach with the control on decisions shifted to beneficiaries acknowl-

edging feedbacks among users, and at the central level, the health sector policy to have an equity-oriented measure. The last chapter discusses e-governance, as a responsive and transparent service delivery mechanism to address the effectiveness of governments. Suresh Mishra addresses performance measures and standards, although still nascent, through the quantitative benchmarking methods, can serve as good performance standards.

A significant realization and common ground in all the 'best practices' presented here is that different stakeholders are able to acknowledge the feedback of other entities and respond, realign and refocus to benefit for the greater common good. Another key aspect noted here though not explicitly identified by the authors is that most of these socio-technical systems exhibit self-organization and have emerged out of the need to improve either initiated by the administrator at the local level or by the civic participation or through a public-private partnership or even by the judiciary. It is these local interactions that have resulted in global changes that result in self-organization, micro-innovations leading to macro-changes.

This book presents some innovations and best practices in the public sector reforms in one collection and could be a good reference for budding bureaucrats and is relevant for all administrators – the real practitioners, academicians and all the training institutes dealing with administrative practices.

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NASEEMA – The Incredible Story.
Translated from Marathi by Aasha Deodhar. Viveka Foundation, New Delhi. 2005. pp. 244. Rs 250.

A poor young lad was completely disappointed and was contemplating suicide. One night, he was flustered when GOD appeared before him. GOD blessed the young lad and told him that all his mis-

ery was over and he was going to start a great life. But ... there was ONE condition. The young lad readily agreed. GOD asked him for his TWO legs and the young lad shrieked promptly and said NO. GOD smiled and asked why not? The young lad said his legs were worth TWO crores. This went on with all his body parts and finally GOD told the young lad, 'you see my child, you are worth several crores and you think you have nothing. If you simply put your body and mind to good use, you will never want to die and live your life to the fullest'.

This book is one solid personal narrative of a woman who lives her life to the fullest. Not just any woman but a wheelchair-bound woman who walks taller than most of us. Naseema, a truly incredible paraplegic woman has not only fought her own disability but has put able-bodied like us to shame by her true grit and determination to support an entire community of disabled people.

Originally written in Marathi and thereafter translated in English by Aasha Deodhar, the book does not contain any chapters, sections, divisions, etc. but gives the reader a continuous account of an intimate glimpse into the life of a disabled person. With tiny illustrations, placed on several pages, the reader enjoys renewed freshness in content time and again.

Naseema was born a normal child to a superintendent in the Central Excise Department with several brothers and sisters. At the age of sixteen, Naseema turned into a paraplegic after suffering various infections but never knowing the real reason for her condition. A very lively person, who enjoyed academics, arts, science, commerce, drama, dancing ... just about everything, had to face bewilderment at first and then suicidal depression. She came across 'a few good men and women' who helped her to rise from the ashes and thereafter fought not only her own disability but took on the pain of an entire community. Naseema's compassion shines in what we today know as 'Helpers of the Handicapped (HOH)'.

HOH is a hostel-cum-rehabilitation centre in Kolhapur, which caters to poor disabled children from rural areas. HOH provides for surgeries, aids/appliances, exposure to sports and cultural activities, vocational training and employment opportunities. HOH has completely rehabilitated 35 children and has been successfully producing wheelchairs, tricycles, calipers, crutches, etc. To top it all, the centre is

totally manned by physically challenged persons. In simple words, Naseema had the vision to give the disabled a life full of 'dignity, pride, honour and self-respect' through the various institutions she has founded. Naseema's version of complete rehabilitation extends beyond the call of duty. From basic education to employment, from food, shelter and clothing to every possible medical treatment and surgery. Naseema is a shining example of philanthropy in the true sense of the word. Even today, well-known philanthropists follow the book, while Naseema follows her heart.

The most touching part about Naseema and her book is the depth of honesty with which a disabled person leads her life and the moral values with which she conducts her everyday chores. Determination and grit could have taken Naseema places but the underlying truth about her is her 'honesty within'. Naseema was fortunate to have parents and siblings with upright values, which is today helping her to reach her goals.

Naseema's inter-personal and intra-personal skills are at the forefront of her management ability, her eye for detail and her determination to succeed could easily give MBAs or Ph Ds, a run for their money. Her ability to extract the best from each and every co-worker (ranging from administration to production, finance, research or revenue generation) and her sincere gratitude towards them makes her one of the best 'humble' leaders for the disabled community.

She cites several real-life examples along the way. One such story is about Narendra. In 1986, Narendra was administered 'glycerol' by mistake while he was away from home. The glycerol sent him in a coma for four months and when he finally bounced back, Narendra had lost ALL his memory. The hospital's records knew him as a 'unknown person'. Narendra's legs had collapsed; he could not speak and had impaired vision. With tremendous will-power (and of course medical treatment) Narendra slowly began his routine activities like brushing his teeth, shave and have a bath on his own.

He was shifted from the hospital to the Cheshire Home (Andheri, Mumbai) in 1992 until he met Naseema at a sports meet for paraplegics in Kolhapur. It was at that time that Naseema saw the 'Genius in Narendra'. Naseema (a paraplegic herself) went all out to transform Narendra's life. She brought him to Kolhapur, took him to the best of doctors and was determined to retrieve his roots and reunite Narendra with his family. Narendra would write (because he could not speak) and Naseema would talk to him at length. As he spoke, Naseema took notice of every detail and after days of investigation, she got a tip (a response) from a driver. According to the driver, Narendra had studied in Sweden and lived with his grandfather. He had come to Delhi for some research work in neurological disorders. As a last resort to restore his memory, Naseema left for Delhi along with Narendra and her most committed colleagues – Mr & Mrs Deshbhratar.

To everyone's disappointment, Narendra's roots could not be traced. To add to the misery, Narendra suffered from a severe attack of Multiple Sclerosis in September 1994, which further affected his spinal cord and hand. Narendra's fight with destiny continued undeterred. Narendra went on to design his own calipers and Naseema thereafter appointed him as a Supervisor at her Training Centre. Not only did he redesign calipers and other useful instruments for the handicapped but he also got his products patented and thereafter endorsed by the Bureau of Indian Standards. Narendra's determination not only brought some of his speech back but went on to 'marry' Vineeta who was willing to accept him the 'way he was'. On World Disabled Day, Narendra wrote:

'When I look at Naseema Didi, PD Deshpande Sir and Mr. Deshbhratar and their families working here, I cannot but notice the shine on their faces even when they are exhausted. Today, I hand over all copyrights and patent rights to Helpers of the Handicapped for whatever I have invented – appliances for eating and writing as well as the fibreglass calipers. I would like them supplied all over India

and bring a smile to miserable disabled people. I seek your love and cooperation.'

Naseema's book is not just for intellectuals or scientists nor is it meant for philanthropists with lot of compassion for the poor or underprivileged. This book is for 'each and every one of us' who aspires to achieve big dreams but fail each time we face challenges. Fail each time we need to choose between the good, bad and ugly. Naseema's most valuable mantra is 'You lack nothing, you are only different' and that is very true for all of us – able or disabled.

Recipient of several outstanding awards including the Calvin Kare Ability for Eminence, 2002, Chennai and the National Award for Role Model, 2001, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, Naseema holds several important positions and is a Member of many committees on Disabled Women, Mental Health, Autism, etc.

Besides Helpers of the Handicapped in Kolhapur, Naseema has established DILASA – a resident centre for mentally retarded and severely handicapped persons at Kanhe, Dist Pune, SAMARTH VIDYA MANDIR – a primary school at Kolhapur for both – able and disabled persons, LAJAWAB – a mobile canteen for achieving self-sufficiency and SWAPNA NAGARI – a residential centre for physically challenged and homeless aged in Sindhudurg district with a view to make them self-sufficient through farming and allied food products.

Naseema – The Incredible Story, is not just a story but also a legend, living life to the fullest and giving much more than what she gets. A touching book full of reality, grit, determination, and honesty – perhaps even life transforming for some of us.

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