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A short note on Dr Kiran Bedi as a change agent.

Sarita Chauhan, PhD

saritachauhan@gmail.com

[DR KIRAN BEDI: A JOURNEY FROM “WHAT IS POSSIBLE?” TO “IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE!”]

Dr. Kiran Bedi: A journey from “What is possible?” to “It is always possible!”

She has the foresight to think what is possible. She stretches it further to drive “it’s always possible”! Whether she realizes or not she thinks at a systems level and she executes flawlessly using elements that are within the system. If needed, she will not hesitate to modulate the expanse of her system in order to establish symbiosis between diverse systems. She is seen by the establishment as an outsider, yet she is so loyal and integrated within the established system of traditions and core values of being a good human being. She is the visionary super cop with a strong belief in creating choices for correction than preventing crime with oppression and punishment. She has the discipline, strength, determination, resolve, resilience and non-violence of Mohandas Gandhi. She has the ability and charisma to motivate the most hardened convicts to become meditative. She partners with the staff within her division and makes partners with external divisions as diverse as it takes to get things done. She is tough and uncompromising from one perspective and compassionate and caring from the other.

She clearly has the ability to influence at level 1 which is the superficial level at which people act or think. However, she is well known for her ability to shake up the institutions, organizations and the establishments stuck at deeper levels 2 and 3 by helping them see the stark naked deficiencies or realities of their system and showing the ways for them to get out of those trenches. Till today, most admire and love her; the corrupt fear, despise and hate her; and the wise support her. Her methods are evolutionary but the effects of her methods are revolutionary. Her transparency and straightforward attitude comes in the way of many. However, combined with her compassion and the drive to

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pursue the right path for a bigger and higher purpose, her attitude becomes her most powerful strength, to the extent that even the toughest kind of hurdles cannot stop her. The magnitude of her revolutionary effect is so strong that it shakes the rusted, outdated beliefs of corrupt establishments from the roots. Despite all attempts to persecute and punish her, she maintains her course to do what is right and becomes the most admired woman of a nation in 2002. Her challenge to corruption and extortion is costly to the safety and well being of her family in many ways, but she does not lose focus, stays undeterred and keeps marching forward. Among scores of her contribution during her career, one of the magnificent effects of her evolutionary actions is apparent when she is able to transform a jail housing hardened convicts into an ashram of education, meditation and reform.

The protagonist of this essay is Dr Kiran Bedi, one of the most admired women of India and one of the most authentic people I have come across.

Dr Kiran Bedi was India's first and highest ranking woman police officer who joined the Indian Police Service in 1972. Blessed with a long, highly accomplished career and a loving family, she was voted the most admired woman in India in 2002. During her tenure of more than 35 years of tough, innovative and welfare policing, she also spent some time working with the United Nations as the Police Advisor to the Secretary General, in the Department of Peace Keeping Operations. She has also represented India in International forums on crime prevention, drug abuse, police and prison reforms and women's issues. She excelled at sports, academics and later in her career at confident woman leader transforming the world around her incessantly. After her retirement in 2007 she continues to spend her time as a social activist and reformer.

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Dr. Bedi has authored several books, blogs, anchored radio and television shows and is a columnist with leading newspapers and magazines. She is a recipient of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award (also called the Asian Nobel Prize) and numerous decorations. She is a sought after speaker on social, professional and leadership issues. She continues to contribute to the social welfare and reform as a founder of two NGOs, Navjyoti and India Vision Foundation, which reach out to over 10,000 beneficiaries daily, in the areas of drug abuse treatment, schools for children of prisoners, and education, training, counseling, and health care to the urban and rural poor.

Leading change in the habits of a chaotic city: “Crane” Bedi tows PM’s car away

During early 1980’s as India prepared for Asian games to be held in Delhi, Kiran Bedi was appointed the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Chief of Traffic) to bring some structure to the chaotic traffic of Delhi. In preparation for Asian games in Delhi, nineteen sports stadia and many flyovers were under construction throughout the city adding to the already existing chaos, and causing road blocks, diversions and traffic jams. A lack of system for traffic enforcement and perceived lack of importance of traffic police assignment was not helpful either. Commuters in Delhi were used to this chaos as they muscled and managed their way through this traffic. It was not uncommon to see traffic police personnel to accept bribes on the road from traffic violators at informal (and illegal) challan posts. I have heard stories about how the traffic cops often hid their extortion/bribe cash under a stone at nearby location to avoid being caught with cash in their pockets. Sometimes street kids stole that cash when cops were not looking. It was a dangerous game that street kids used to play until corrupt cops would realize that their

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extortion was extorted and go after these kids. Used to the bribery and extortion for years, rich and powerful had no respect for a traffic cop and upon being stopped by the traffic cop, first line of action would be to offer cash as bribe. If on occasion an honest traffic cop wrote a “challan” (ticket of violation), the rich, powerful or otherwise arrogant might simply tear off the “challan” to finish the story on the spot. Imagine influencing that level of deep seated beliefs in the entire system of the enforcers and commuters. A serious change in the day to day habits of commuters, enforcers and the process of making choices was needed. Kiran committed herself to this daunting task. She worked nonstop for 19 hours every day. As a first step she began assessing traffic signal errors throughout the city and ensuring that when possible the corrections were made on the spot. For increasing the awareness among commuters toward responsible behavior, she began giving instructions personally through cordless loud speakers on the road. She rented all available cranes in the city and began towing vehicles that broke down on the road or were parked indiscriminately blocking the traffic. She enforced spot fines for traffic violations or towed away errant vehicles irrespective of the status of the car owner. It created quite a stir when a sub-inspector in Kiran Bedi’s unit towed away the Indian Prime Minister’s official car which was parked in an unauthorized location for repairs. Kiran Bedi without hesitation supported the sub-inspector in that he was only doing his duty and did not deserve to take the heat of the high level enquiry that resulted from his action. Because of this incident significant concerns were raised regarding the coordination between the PM’s security staff and Delhi’s Police Department. Kiran Bedi made no compromises or concessions, not now and not later. Her traffic enforcements sent shivers to the drivers of VIP vehicles who were used to parking indiscriminately in unauthorized spots for their convenience even if it exacerbated traffic

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jams. They now scurried for authorized parking spaces fearing that “Crane Bedi” might come and tow their vehicle away if they do not comply.

She constantly learnt from her ground staff and shared the knowledge with all in her organization. It became a common experience for Delhi citizens to see Kiran Bedi personally on the road clearing traffic bottlenecks or irregularities. She ran education and awareness programs followed by enforcement campaigns. She always had higher value for rewarding positive behavior over punishing of negative, although when necessary she ensured that the negative behaviors were brought to notice as a last resort. She formally rewarded her staff for their accomplishments. She made sure that the planning, organization and the city development efforts were coordinated with traffic plans by collaborating with MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi), DDA (Delhi Development Authority), DESU (Delhi Electrical Supply Unit) and NATPAC (National Transportation, Planning and Research Centre). She established programs to monitor behavior patterns of the motorists by observation on the road through “government on the wheels”. Kiran developed Asian games traffic management plans and traffic safety literature through private sponsorships. That left enough room in the budget for Kiran Bedi for allocating four-wheeled vehicles for her traffic inspectors. In those days it was unheard of for traffic inspectors to be provided four wheeled vehicles for their field jobs. She empowered her staff in every possible way, so that they could own the problems, responsibility and results. The sum total of the efforts of her team resulted in excellent execution of traffic plans during Asian games and she was invited to receive an award “Asian Jyoti” for excellence. Kiran declined to accept the award for herself alone and made a recommendation that the award be made a part of the professional record of the entire unit. Such magnanimity was

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unheard of and government leaders were not willing to set an unusual precedence by honoring Kiran's request. Notwithstanding the excellent execution and tremendous success of her traffic management plans, soon after the Asian games Kiran was transferred to Goa in 1983 partly because of the controversy related to the lawyers strike against the handcuffing of a thief who often harassed women on campus and in buses but who also turned out to be a lawyer (also read Chapter 11 from the book I dare!) and her stints with towing away of illegally parked cars of celebrities.

Kiran Bedi finds opportunities in "punishment" assignments

I spent most of my eighties commuting through Delhi traffic during my undergraduate and postgraduate school years. It is an unbelievable yet credible contradiction that in this modern day nation which was quite a liberal society in its ancient history and where people worship numerous women deities, the 70's and 80's (despite the fact that a woman held the Prime Minister's job), were a constant reminder to a woman that she had no right to be out there commuting with men in the public transport system. A woman was lucky if she was not followed by or harassed by men on a daily basis and had to be constantly on the alert to defend herself. In my opinion and millions of others, one of the less known facts about Kiran Bedi is that among many traffic super cops, Kiran is responsible single handedly for bringing safety and discipline in the public transport system in terms of treatment of women travelling in the buses. Prior to that and even today to some extent, many families used to refuse to send their daughters to colleges for the fear of harassment or molestation. If you put yourself in the context of that time, Kiran Bedi had to be several times tougher than her peers, superiors (all men) and criminals she dealt with

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in order for her to accomplish her job during those years. Constant attempts were made to attack her in-person, in spirit and in her career, but every time she appeared from these attacks stronger than before. Because of the discipline introduced by her, travel in DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation) buses became much safer for women commuters.

Her bold actions came at a cost to her career and her family (for details see her biographies). Despite that she would treat all equal and not spare a wrong doer just because of he or she held a VIP status or was affiliated with a VIP family.

In one of her punishment assignments at Goa, her request for leave was withheld by her superiors when her daughter was very ill with kidney infection. When Kiran left in an emergency to care for her seriously ill child for a couple of weeks hoping that the leave will be sanctioned while she was en route, she was informed that she was “officially absconding” from the job. Her assignment at Tihar jail was a punishment job as well. However, Kiran Bedi was always driven by higher reasons other than simply advancing her career and she always found opportunities in every assignment she was given as punishment or otherwise. In 2007, Kiran took voluntary retirement to pursue her commitment to the education of underprivileged children and women, drug abuse rehabilitation and rural reform and continues her journey of social reform.

Life at Tihar Jail: One journey can change a life. One life can change the world.

Kiran Bedi became the Inspector General of Prisons in 1993. The success of historical reforms she introduced in Tihar jail, are nothing short of miracle. Here she was able to reach out in a short period of time the imprisoned and the outcasts of the society at their deepest levels. As that time Tihar jail was the largest and most corrupt prison in India

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spanning about 200 acres of land. With over 11000 inmates, Tihar was the largest in terms of human dimension as well in India and Asia-Pacific. Tihar is among the largest prisons in the world as well.

Quoted from Kiran Bedi's book, *It's Always Possible*-“Institutions such as Tihar which are inhabited by thousands of people behind huge blind gates can be seen either by the inhabitants sent in by court orders or the few “privileged” persons in charge. I happened to be one such eyewitness from May 1993 to May 1995.....I was there to correct not accuse. The magnitude of the problem was enormous. It took me months. Institutions take their time to reveal despite individual impatience”.

I think Kiran Bedi seems to be referring to multiple levels of thought processes and systems in an institution. As an entering leader it may take days, months or even years depending on the historical and psychological depth of an institution to reach the core beliefs of individuals as well as organizations. Only then, one can begin to influence the thought process and thought system. As a new entrant to prison system Kiran was unprepared just like any of her predecessors.

Kiran Bedi's appointment as IG (Prisons) was meant to be a punishment by the establishment. To those who despised Kiran Bedi's unquestionable and unshakable ethics, it was a mission to crucify her. Kiran considered herself a soldier, duty-bound to take charge of a “hell-hole” where rampant corruption, ongoing violence, gang wars and extortion continued unexposed for years. In her early days as a police officer, Kiran Bedi developed a core belief that prisons should play a supportive role in reforming repeat offenders. However, so far in her career she neither had interaction with prisons nor come

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across a system that would provide that interaction. Kiran viewed her appointment as an opportunity to take her concept to practice.

Behind the tough and stern looks on their faces, Kiran could see the vulnerability of inmates. Kiran felt that the confinement of inmates in Tihar jail was in itself sufficient to render the punishment of their crime. They did not need to be punished further than that. In the first few weeks the sordid reality of a derailed prison system became apparent to her where humans were stuffed in barrack as animals. When media visited with VIPs, they got to see the artificially created neat and clean places that were en route to the VIPs tours. On the outside of Tihar jail lofty claims of prison reforms and rehabilitation were made by these VIPs. In addition to severe lack of basic amenities and medical care for all, women prisoners were particularly vulnerable to molestation and sexual favors demanded by the prison guards. There were infants staying with their mothers in the female ward. Kiran knew that something had to be done. She wanted to put a long term system in place for not only while she was Inspector General but also for after she was gone. Someone had to carry forward the reformation process while saving the next victim.

Within days of joining her duties at Tihar, Kiran made observations and started engaging her staff through instruction concerning various aspects of Prison Administration to introduce cleaner living conditions, plan for literacy and education programs, better medical care, de-addiction drive and a sense of community in the prison. In addition to her professional qualifications and capabilities, Kiran always listened and learnt from her staff. Here in Tihar also, listening to her staff, she was able to bring to fruition a concept that is simply unheard of anywhere in the world. A secular, non-sectarian ancient Indian

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meditation technique, at one time Vipasana was taught to a group of more than 1000 volunteer prison inmates of various religious beliefs (Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims) and more than a dozen nationalities. The successful completion of this program resulted in the establishment of a permanent center within Tihar complex, which metamorphosed from Tihar jail to Tihar Ashram. Vipasana meditational technique became an integral part of the Tihar Ashram (Ashram means a place where a guru lives and teaches). According to Kiran it reinforced her personal conviction that certain duties are not mere jobs, but a whole mission by themselves, for they shape the future.

Since 1993 Kiran Bedi's three C's model of prison management which incorporates collective, corrective and community based approach continues to emerge into a proposed New Prison Act which if approved by the President of India will replace 115 year old Prison Act of 1894.

In the year 1994, Kiran Bedi received Ramon Magsaysay Award and India Vision Foundation (IVF) was founded to work in the field of prison reforms, women advancement, education, vocational training, sports promotion and rural development. The foundation began with providing education and rehabilitation to children of prisoners in its "Crime Home Children" project. The IVF organization appears to be aligned with Kiran Bedi's philosophy of transparency. It was very easy for me to find the year-end balance sheets on the IVF website to get an overall picture of IVFs accounts. The Gali School project of the foundation reaches out to children of the slums in the streets (Gali in Hindi means street) to educate them by organizing a class in the street itself. The teacher is a local literate about eight-class pass or above and teaches a group of children for 2 hours every day and

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initiates a process of creating interest in learning. The local teacher earns an honorarium in the process. The foundation runs 55 education centers in collaboration with Navjyoti in an informal atmosphere in one of the largest slums of Delhi. In the rural outskirts of Delhi, the foundation runs a project aimed at empowering the village community. The foundation provides counseling and support services for people with addictions. A vocational training center provides training to the women in tailoring, embroidery and weaving. In addition to these the foundation has a crèche, a health center, a library and a legal aid center. The project runs on Kiran's family land dedicated for the purpose.

Kiran Bedi, Hu Dabai (Huanghe Institute of Science and Technology, Henan, China), Marilyn Carlson Nelson (Carlson Companies, USA) are very different personalities with very distinct journeys, but at a higher level they all think beyond themselves. They think for bigger and better good for others that creates shared value. It is this quality which differentiates true and authentic leaders like Kiran Bedi, Hu Dabai and Marilyn Carlson from those who merely have the designation of the leader in their job titles but can't get enough in terms of power, status or money for themselves. The true leaders have a mindset that spans the entire enterprise around them and seek creating shared value for the enterprise and its members and it is this mindset what makes them most effective. Personal success for them is not their primary goal. Instead of personal success they passionately and personally seek success of the enterprise. Their personal success is merely an outcome of their commitment and their work toward goals that benefit communities, institutions, organizations, societies and enterprises around them.

Sources:

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www.kiranbedi.com

I dare! By Kiran Bedi

It is always possible! By Kiran Bedi

<http://www.yesmadamsir.com/long-synopsis.php>

<http://www.kiranbedi.org/news/view>

<http://www.navjyoti.org.in/>

<http://www.indiavisionfoundation.org/>

Exhibit I: Photo of Dr Kiran Bedi, PhD



Exhibit II:

The trailer of “Yes Madam, Sir” a movie on the life story of Dr. Kiran Bedi.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdtEzIdoF4A>

Exhibit III. A glimpse of WHAT IS POSSIBLE→WHAT IS POSSIBLE→WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Kiran Bedi’s profile: from facebook profile and verified through multiple sources.

Academics:

- MA (Pol. Sc.); LLB (Law degree); PhD; Nehru Fellow.

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Sports:

- Asian & National Tennis Champion.

Career Highlights:

- Director General, BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs).
- Director General, Home Guards & Director Civil Defense.
- United Nations as Civilian Police Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operation.
- Special Commissioner, Intelligence, Delhi Police.
- Joint Commissioner of Police Training, Delhi Police.
- Inspector General Prisons, Tihar Prison, Delhi.
- Inspector General of Police, Chandigarh
- Special Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi

Major Awards:

- Ramon Magsaysay Award (Philippines) for Government Service (Equivalent Asian Nobel Prize).
- Joseph Beuys Foundation Award (German) for Holistic & Innovative Management.
- Morrison Tom Gitchoff Award (USA) for actions that have significantly improved the quality of justice in India.
- Pride of India Award (USA) for commitment towards Human Welfare, women's rights, outstanding services and for upholding secular values.

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- Woman of the Year Award 2002 (Italy).
- Police Medal for Gallantry by the President of India.
- Chinmoy Award 2003 for Welfare Policing.
- Appreciation of Service to Humanity, Saheli, Boston 2004.
- UN medal.
- Mother Teresa Award for Social Justice, 2005.

Major Invitations:

- Three UN conferences on Drug Abuse, Women & World Social Summit.
- SAARC Workshop on Drug Trafficking at Islamabad.
- Prison Governors Association, Annual conference at Buxton, UK .
- Panelist with Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen, OSLO.
- National Prayer Breakfast meeting with President Clinton

Publications:

- “It’s Always Possible.”: A book on the transformation of the largest prison in the world.
- “What Went Wrong?”: A compilation of Real Life Stories (Also a Serial on National Television).
- Co-authored “Government@net” on e-governance.
- “I-Dare” & “Kindly Baton” (Biographies).

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- Regular Columnist National Dailies, Times of India, The Tribune, Punjab Kesri, Navbharat Times and The Indian Express (North American Edition).