

Extraordinary stories of the Ordinary

Aparna Sharma, an HR stalwart herself, has gone a step ahead and donned the mantle of a story-teller through her book, *'Between U & Me - Ordinary People - Extraordinary Lessons'*. It covers inspirational tales of individuals across different generations but with relevance to the reader

By **Sangeeta Ghosh Dastidar**

Simplicity in presentation and language places this book beyond the sphere of HR by bringing together the lives and challenges and the resultant success stories of some extraordinary and many ordinary individuals. Following the success of her first book *'Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World'*, in English and Hindi, the new title transcends beyond the realm of HR and can be seen as a quick reference to how individual spirits dare to dream on and go beyond despair, challenges and helplessness to achieve success, how these trails of self-belief and conviction work for their own betterment and in doing so, touch the lives of others around them too.

The format and language have most lucidly brought together 14 individuals including Aparna's own punch, positivity and persistence 'mantra' on a common platform, giving readers a chance to not just sift through the lives of these achievers but also help them pick a page to try and find their own inspirations from them. It is left to the reader how they interpret the tales of successes, as presented by Aparna.

The print format maintains the 'storytelling' mode in each of the tales that introduces the reader to each individual but with a personal touch, which the author alone could do, reflecting upon her own personal interactions and experiences with each of her chosen characters. Each individual story is interspersed by inspiring quotes by the achievers themselves. These highlighted quotes are aimed at motivating the readers. Some tales end with 'Words of Wisdom' and 'Life Lines' that reflect on the learning of the protagonist which the readers are left to ponder over or harness in their own lives. Aparna sketches her 14 chosen celebrities in the first-person narrative which provides a dialogue between the protagonist and the reader, lending some genuine touch to the printed matter.

What is enticing about the book is that while it showcases the lives and times of few stalwarts, Aparna also highlights the likes of maid Vandana Jadhav, whose battles to rise and shine through life are examples in itself. Readers get the privilege to gain firsthand accounts from experts like T.V. Rao and Dr Radhakrishna Pillai on their trials, tribulations and



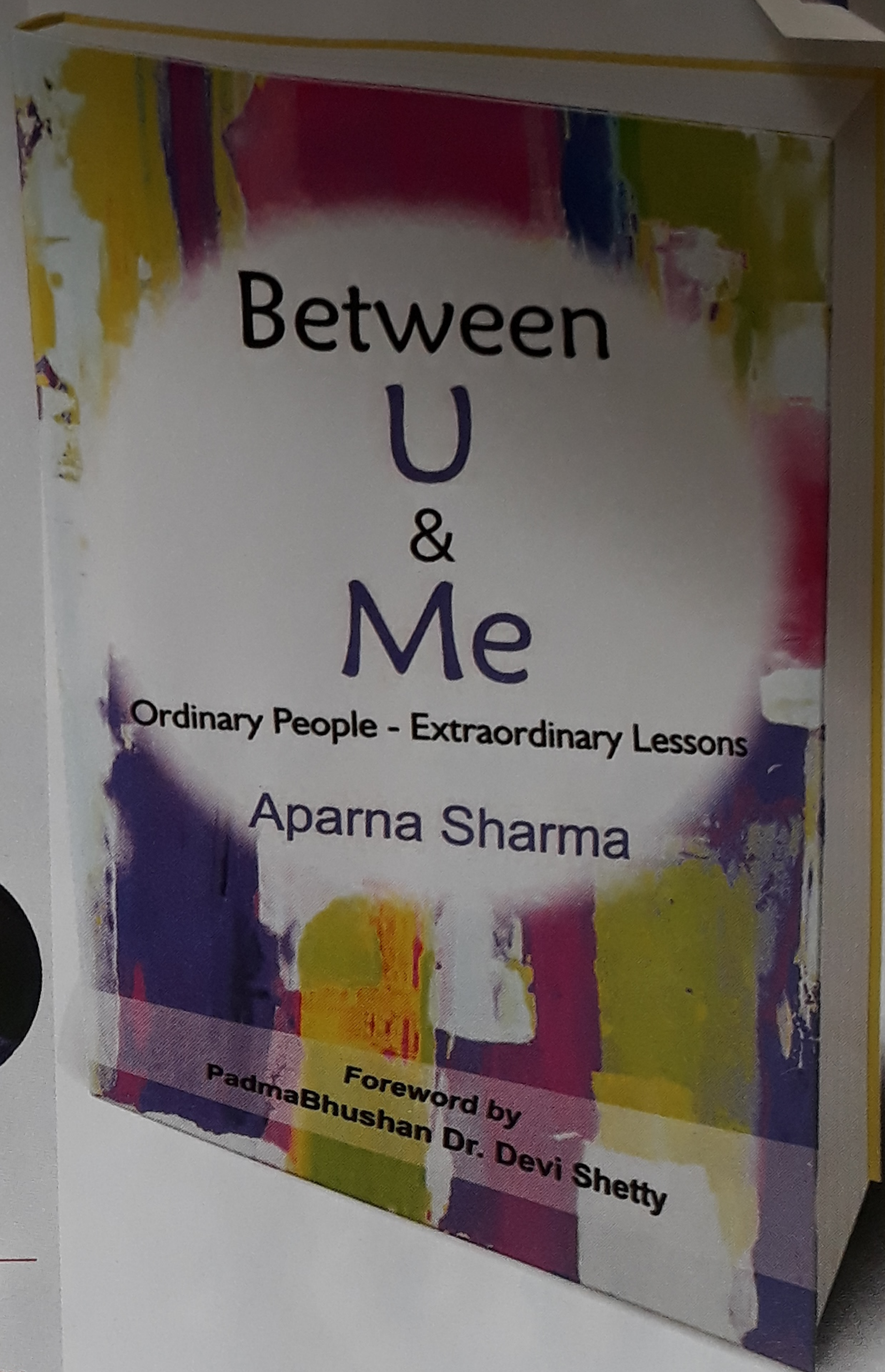
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success. The book is flagged off with the first story on Vimla Patil whose constant feed on the concept of 'woman of substance' as the editor of a popular women's magazine she kept alive, paved a new outlook for most middle-class Indian women during that time. It's quite a courageous attempt by Aparna Sharma to bring both Jadhav and Patil on the same platform.

Besides, readers can also gain perspectives from other lesserknown individuals whose personal stories might not have found elaboration elsewhere. The challenges and upbeat profile of tress-stylist and hair consultant, Tanveer Shaikh, the insights on HR transformations and turnarounds as told by Ashwin Pasricha and the other 'woman of substance'—educationist Dr Fuqua Sault Khan adds belief to the book profiles. The other luminaries include Sara Musavi, Raj Khilnani, Guru Mahamandleshwar Shaileshanand Girihaat, Pheru Singh Ruhela, Prakhar Sharma, Arun Kaimal and Sarita Deouskar that form part of this humane book collaboration.

The foreword by Dr Devi Prasad Shetty definitely sets the tone for a lucid word-flow to this 'living book' akin to the old world charm of the 'bioscope'. A great read for all generations—the need is to preserve the longevity of the content - *Between U & Me* and more!

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"Positive people are a gift from the Almighty. It is important to learn from them and ensure that we, in turn, infuse priority into the lives of those we know"
—Aparna Sharma