

# Book Review: Aparna Sharma's 'Between U & Me' And The Beauty Of Unsung Heroes

A breath of fresh air from the norm of recounting the success stories of the crème de la crème of the business world, author Aparna Sharma in her newest book *Between U & Me*, deviates to dig into the lives of India's unsung heroes; commemorating the everyman and everywoman in India who challenged the status quo. With over 21 years of experience in HR, Aparna Sharma recently became the recipient of the Woman Achiever Award 2018 by the Indian Women Conventions (IWC).

She has beautifully weaved the diverse roles of learning partner, mentor, and coach to leaders, leadership teams and organizations and is known for her vivacity in fulfilling her goals. Also, the author of the 2015 book, 'Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World', which received accolades from all over the world, *Between U & Me* is a beautiful combination of "Being" and Becoming, a sort of coming of age of "ordinary people" who have learned "extraordinary lessons".

Why should inspiration and motivation come from only those who are constantly photographed and written about? What about the undiscovered ones who have beaten the odds to carve out a niche for themselves?



There are many today who cannot identify with the success stories of a celebrity, however, the journey of someone closer to home is more poignant since people believe "If they can do it, so can we!" From Vimla Patil who spent 25 years as the Assistant Editor and Editor of Femina, one of India's top women's magazines, to Tanveer Shaikh of Tanveer's Hair Studio and Academy who was a part of Lakme India Fashion Week for 10 years. In an interview, Aparna Sharma said, "Since it is human nature to share and learn from others, why not seek advice from 'ordinary' but experienced people around us, who can guide us effectively and practically to resolve our problems?" These icons in their own right have not only influenced the world around them but have also played a pivotal role in the author's life. Each

chapter begins with a beautiful letter from the author to the person in question, reminiscing the times shared while also conveying her admiration for them.

From her academic and professional life to her personal moments, these protagonists have shaped Sharma's own success story and the book is a beautiful tribute to the people who have been mentioned. She says, "Some of these stories will leave you teary-eyed, a few will make you ponder over the unjust norms of society while others will leave you marveling at the sheer persistence of these people in the face of all odds." From her beloved school teacher to her cool classmate, they have all impacted her life for the better. Moreover, all of them will, no doubt, change your perspective towards life and leave you motivated and empowered to take on your own challenges and rise above your situation. A great source of encouragement for the reader, this book inspires people to never let adversity stop them from fulfilling their dreams for the future.

Interestingly, it also delves into the dark side of Indian culture and its impact on the lives of Indian women and the way in which the women protagonists overcame these with fierce fearlessness. This is especially seen in the story of Vandana Jadhav, who has been described as 'A Cheerful Crusader,'; a woman who braves all the odds to make something of herself. Readers will be pleasantly surprised with Sharma's "warts and all approach" to success stories where she highlights not only the highs but also the lows which make the journey something that every reader can identify with. While some people may write off the successful, this book tells of people who are the product of their decisions rather than their mere talent.

Therefore, this book is for everyone, regardless of which professional field they belong to; something to tug on everyone's professional and personal heartstrings. While one may believe that the grass is always greener for those who have achieved success, the real secret is to water your own garden and make it green too.

