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# Kiran Bedi's Innovative Initiatives and Leadership Practices in Puducherry, India

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this research paper is to outline innovative initiatives and leadership practices by Kiran Bedi, the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, India to achieve good governance. It unveils leadership challenges and offers leadership lessons. It explains her courageous and style of servant leadership. It explores how to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem. It implores all people to work for satisfaction, not for recognition. It concludes that each person is gifted with one life and that life must deliver its duties and tasks with excellence and without craving any attention or approval from others to provide meaning.*

## Introduction

*"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."*

—Mahatma Gandhi



Kiran Bedi was the first female police officer in India to join the Indian Police Service. She is an educator, sports person, police officer, social activist, spiritualist, author, reformer, politician, philosopher, and above all, a servant leader. She is a multi-faceted personality with immense experience and expertise, imbued with the breadth of knowledge in various spheres including public safety. Presently she is the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, India. She has added her grace to the position and successfully completed 1000 days in her office, taking Puducherry to great heights.

## Kiran Bedi's Strategies to Build a Prosperous Puducherry

The following are Kiran Bedi's tools and techniques used to build a strong team to attain accountability, excellence, and effectiveness.

1. Endeavor to seek, think, and translate ideas and initiatives into action.
2. Work with integrity and speed.
3. Be analytical in approach and decision-making.
4. Move out of one's comfort zone, even on the weekends, in response to people's grievances and/or issues identified.
5. Review the state of security and of public services, especially their availability late into the night.
6. Raise expectations, meet challenges, and constantly widen capacity.
7. Ensure financial prudence and maintain constant vigil.

8. Promote networking through NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) participation and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) contributions.
9. Communicate constantly using available tools of technology, social networking, and other media.
10. Remain sensitive, compassionate, and equitable in redressing public grievances.
11. Fashion a team that is forward-thinking and is committed to realize the vision of a “Prosperous Puducherry.”

## **Kiran Bedi’s Innovative Initiatives and Leadership Practices**

Kiran Bedi reported for duty as the Lt. Governor of Puducherry on May 29, 2016 and completed her first 1000 days on February 22, 2019. She generated both complements and criticisms as the Lt. Governor. She made several bold decisions, always keeping the largest interests of Puducherrians in view. She converted “Raj Nivas” (governor’s palace) into “Lok Nivas” (people’s place) with her courageous and humble leadership. She opened the doors of Raj Nivas for common people and ensured accountability and responsibility. She walked her talk and led by example. She connected with common people, earned their trust, and ensured transparency. The following innovative initiatives and leadership practices were adopted and by her administration and used to transform Puducherry. She:

- Conducted one-on-one briefings with government officials and departmental heads, prompting the improvement and standardization of essential administrative practices for better delivery of public services. These personal briefings provide a necessary platform from which government officials could access and emulate proven practices.
- Introduced the practice of personal field visits to departments to gain better understanding of, and support for, departmental functions. These visits are calculated to bridge the gaps inherent in hierarchical structuring, provide insights into practical aspects of work methodology, and clarify those resources available to implement within individual departments.
- Introduced a 10 AM meeting which serves to deconstruct stereotypes and historical conventions. The meeting involved a core group of “Team Raj Nivas” who assembled on all working days precisely at 10 AM to identify the plan of action for the day and the week ahead. This daily encounter is not limited to work-related activities, but rather provided a forum for sharing ideas and thoughts, collective thinking, envisioning, and constant learning. It serves as a Think Tank and also as an implementing and monitoring agency. In this meeting, ideas are conceptualized, issues of importance are noted, and news reports are disseminated. Each day’s proceedings are recorded. The minutes are communicated to relevant departments and followed up for implementation purposes. The gathering symbolizes the spirit of teamwork and provides synergy, creativity, cohesion, and harmony with moments of individual brilliance. Its introduction invoked a sense of freshness and innovativeness in the work culture.
- Initiated “Open House” which brought in a revolutionary change. It is the first step towards the transformation of Raj Nivas to a People’s Nivas. 40 entry

passes are provided each day from Monday to Wednesday. People – regardless of status, age, caste, or creed – are permitted to step into the precincts. The most marginalized are able to walk into the Raj Nivas to air their grievances for redress.

- Introduced “6 AM Weekend Rounds” – i.e. waking early on Saturday and Sunday mornings for field visits to focus on areas that required attention.
- Introduced “Visitors Hour” where the visitors are invited to be photographed with her – a truly unique experience for each visitor. It was originally conceptualized to help visitors appreciate the heritage of the building and to inspire youth to pursue careers of governance and administration.
- Introduced “Raj Nivas Film Series.” Once a month on Saturday evenings, the lawns of Raj Nivas are converted into an open-air theatre where children, parents, and teachers assemble to watch popular values-based films. Children get an opportunity to interact with the Lt. Governor. She secures assurances from the children that they will endeavor to give their best in both academic studies and sports in order to comprehensively acquire leadership skills. The objective is to create a responsible future generation.
- Introduced “Raj Nivas Lecture Series.” She transformed Raj Nivas into a Convention Centre, designed to engage residents of Puducherry on “Thought Leadership” through a series of interactive sessions by eminent speakers from fields of history, art, literature, leadership, management, science, culture, health, spirituality, and more. She encouraged learning, unlearning, and relearning to remain relevant in the world.
- Envisaged “Raj Nivas Leadership Series” which is an initiative to impart training through interactive sessions by co-opting leaders in the administration of Puducherry. This series endeavors to groom members from teams to be leaders. It draws speakers from across the spectrum of the workforce in the Puducherry Administration.
- Initiated “Raj Nivas Art & Culture Series” which includes the performing, visual, and fine arts as well as other creative explorations. It aims to promote traditional, local art, and culture forms and showcase works of eminent artists. Puducherry with its Franco-Indian heritage, the legacy of Roman connections and an evolving cosmopolitan nature is at a juncture of establishing itself as a center for varied creative interactions.
- Evolved a system of self-evaluation for officers of the various departments to improve the delivery of public services. These in-house evaluation modules aim to refresh as well as update knowledge on the latest interpretation of laws, amendments, and administrative instructions/executive orders. The module is comprised of a personal particulars format, a subject-based questionnaire, and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis by each individual. While the subject-based questionnaire assesses the subject knowledge and encourages self-learning, the SWOT analysis leads to a database of the department, providing input for departmental improvements. Participating officers leave with improved confidence, enhanced knowledge, and a renewed interest in their environments.

- Advocated the empowerment of women,. She believes that women are prime movers of change. Empowering them raises their families from poverty, promoting prosperity and economic and social development. With women's leadership, good public health can be assured, as can family security, education for the younger generation and care of elders. Moreover, welfare schemes targeting women have proven successful in generating employment and asset building.
- Started a convergence initiative for villages to bring all essential services together and promote their coordination. At a local level, this convergence is led by a senior official, who is responsible for coordinating the implementation of development projects, as decided by the local community.

### **Leadership Lessons from Kiran Bedi**

Kiran Bedi is a visionary leader and a strategist. She emphasizes the importance of goal setting to provide a mental blueprint and to save time, thus moving one towards success. She is an effective communicator who shares with anecdotes, inspiring examples, and illustrations. She believes that passion must come within a person. She implores others to strive for happiness. The following represent several key lessons descriptive of her leadership style:

- Have an internal locus of control. Believe in yourself. Set your own goals. Work with excellence. Compete with yourself. Raise your bar constantly.
- Be passionate about your profession. Contribute your best without expecting any returns. Work for satisfaction, not for recognition.
- You are the product of your choices. 90 percent of your life depends on you while the 10 percent of your life depends on external forces and factors which are beyond your control.
- Be passionate about making a difference in the lives of others.
- Walk your talk. Lead by example. Be an effective time manager.
- Be courageous and stand by your principles and philosophies.
- Connect with common people. Participate actively in developmental activities.
- Build a strong team. When your team trusts you they support you wholeheartedly and you can deliver your goods effectively.
- Don't blame the circumstances. Work with what you have. Remember, it is the bad tradesmen who blame their tools.
- Invest your efforts consistently without an obsession for outcomes.
- Emphasize excellence. Invest your heart and soul in whatever you do. Hate being an ordinary individual. Instead, love being an extraordinary individual.
- Life is an incline either you go up or go down.
- Rise above pettiness and petty people. Stay away from the people who hold you back.
- Empower women. Women must be economically independent to assert themselves.
- Practice gratitude to keep you happy forever.
- Have an inner urge to serve others. Don't compromise your efforts. Add value to others consistently and make a difference in their lives.

## Be Part of the Solution, not the Problem

Kiran Bedi is a creative genius who knows what she wants from herself and others. She says that the human mind is the traffic of thoughts. Ultimately, one thought will supersede others, revealing the course of action to pursue. In times of disorder and confusion, one must relax and meditate.

Kiran Bedi brought revolutionary changes to the prison system by focusing upon the prisoner population. She initiated several reforms and instigated the change in spite of the scarcity of funds and resources. Bedi advocates that crime is the product of a distorted mind. She encourages meditation and spiritualism. She is a courageous leader and a servant leader.

## Kiran Bedi—Queen of Controversies

*“You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life.”* – Winston Churchill

Kiran Bedi generated controversy wherever she went because she followed the rules without any fear. She successfully refuted all charges. She was referred to as *Crane Bedi* as she had the courage to tow the Indian Prime Minister's car due to the violation of parking rules. Everybody was equal to her. She added value to her profession wherever she went and whatever she was assigned to do in spite of inadequate resources and funds. Succinctly, she is part of the solution, not the problem.

## Work for Satisfaction, not for Recognition

Kiran Bedi is flexible and adaptable. She is sensitive and compassionate. She is attracted by the real world, not fiction. She appreciates reading books on leadership, management, and spirituality. She is the founder of two voluntary organizations, namely, Navajyoti and India Vision Foundation.

Kiran Bedi is a self-made woman who rose from the ranks with her hard work, grit, and determination. She received a number of accolades including the President's Gallantry Award in 1979; the Magsaysay Award for Government Service in 1994; the Pride of India in 1999; and the Mother Teresa Memorial National Award for Social Justice in 2005. Embracing the lessons from her leadership may help propel one to excel as a courageous and servant leader.

## Conclusion

*“There is nothing unfinished on my agenda. I do whatever I can for the day. Simple! If I were to die today; I will depart with nothing impending.”* – Kiran Bedi

Kiran Bedi has transformed the union territory of Puducherry with her courage, charisma, compassion, commitment, and contribution. She remains an inspiration for

others – especially for women. She will be remembered forever in Indian history for her courageous and servant leadership.

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<https://rajnivas.py.gov.in/>

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## About the Author



**Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D.** is the Father of “Soft Leadership” and Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with 38 years of experience and the author of over 45 books including the award-winning ‘21 Success Sutras for CEOs’ URL: <http://www.com/21-Success-Sutras-Ceos-Rao/dp/162865290X>. He is a C-Suite advisor and a sought-after keynote speaker globally. He brings a strategic eye and long-range vision given his multifaceted professional experience including military, teaching, training, research, consultancy, and philosophy. He is passionate about serving and making a difference in the lives of others. He trains a new generation of leaders through leadership education and publications. His vision is to build one million students as global leaders by 2030 URL: [http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one\\_31.html](http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.in/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one_31.html). He advocates gender equality globally (#HeForShe). He was honored as an upcoming International Leadership Guru by Global Gurus URL: <https://globalgurus.org/upcoming-leadership-gurus/>. He coined an innovative teaching tool – Meka’s Method; leadership training tool – 11E Leadership Grid; and leadership learning tool – Soft Leadership Grid. He invests his time in authoring books and blogging on executive education, learning, and leadership. Most of his work is available free of charge on his four blogs including <http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com>. He is a prolific author and a dynamic, energetic and inspirational leadership speaker. He can be reached at [msrlctr@gmail.com](mailto:msrlctr@gmail.com).