



Book Review on “Celebrating Small Victories” Written by J.V.R. Prasada Rao

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In the book titled “Celebrating Small Victories”¹ written by J.V.R. Prasada Rao, a former top bureaucrat in the Indian government’s health ministry excelled to narrate a beautiful recent flashback on how the talented administrative skills combined with an attitude helped to manage and control HIV/AIDS epidemic in India. There are very few books written in the world in the same spirit to explain what went on within the government in terms of coordinating, planning, and executing the AIDS control programs. This book is not aimed at typical academic courses or reference material. It is written brilliantly for politicians, general public health professionals in the government, secretaries in the government, and business management case studies across the world.

HIV/AIDS could be treated as one of the major pandemics that affected almost all the countries of the world before COVID-19. India being one of the most highly dense and populous countries in the world, the pandemic could have done more damage to the public health than it is seen during 2000–2020, had it not put proper planning and action². The proportion of the size of HIV infected in a country to its size of the total population if we consider, India’s HIV numbers during 1980–2020 could be low to moderate risk. India’s national HIV numbers since the beginning of 1980 never reached the 3 million mark even though its population size ranged between 0.7 billion and 1.3 billion during this period. The initially projected numbers by various regions of the world were provided in the early 1990s by a simple model developed by the World Health Organization (WHO)³. A national population survey conducted in India during 2005–2006 concluded that HIV estimates in the country in 2006 never crossed 2.5 million⁴. There were success stories of India’s HIV/AIDS in terms of successful program implementation and mathematical modeling perspectives, for example^{5–8}.

The author’s recollection went all the way to the formation of the government of India’s first AIDS control program in the early 1990s, epidemic growth in Mumbai, and Chennai, trucker drivers across the country, and what was the role played by him in connecting key people in India who were involved in seeing HIV patients, health secretaries at the state level who played an active role in the initial stages. The descriptions provided in the book in overcoming various initial stage administrative and other difficulties due to the stigma attached to individuals who are HIV positive, setting up important tasks of reaching high-risk populations, etc., provide several good case studies for the management students and faculty who are involved in public health programs. The author not only recollects various events that went into a successful public health program planning but nicely gives credits to all the individuals who have collaborated with him at various stages of his government administrative service.

During 2021–2022, India is celebrating 75 years of independence from British rule. During these 75 years, HIV/AIDS pandemic provides a great example of how a major pandemic was managed with scientific and administrative planning. Still, a lot more has to be done in controlling HIV/AIDS pandemic in India and across the world!

The book certainly commands the respect towards administrative services in India, and the courage shown by the author in providing dedicated service to the nation is a thumping example and inspiration for the future of such aspirants. The passion of the author to do public good goes as an undercurrent is evident while reading the entire book. The author does not leave any gaps highlighting what may exist in administrative services, how they can be overcome in the future, and preparedness for future challenges.

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Arni S. R. Srinivasa Rao is a Professor and Director of the Laboratory for Theory and Mathematical Modeling, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, USA. Until 2012, he held a permanent faculty position at Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. He conducted research and/or taught at several institutions, such as the Indian Statistical Institute, the Indian Institute of Science, the University of Oxford, and the University of Guelph. Dr. Rao's HIV/AIDS models assisted in the national AIDS control planning in India. He served on various committees and consultant on mathematical modeling, public

health, and artificial intelligence (AI). He developed the first AI-based approach in the world for COVID-19 identification through mobile-based applications that inspired several such applications in the world. He taught courses such as real analysis, complex analysis, differential equations, mathematical biology, demography, and stochastic processes. Rao's other noted contributions include his partition theorem in populations, fundamental theorem in stationary population models (Rao–Carey theorem), AI model for COVID-19 identification, and blockchain technology in health care.