

Beno Zephine – India's first IFS officer – Blind



Beno Zephine's ability to keep an eye on success despite being completely visually impaired is what makes her stand out from everyone else! India's first 100 percent visually challenged IFS officer, Beno's inspirational story is one of grit and single-minded focus on her goal.

Born in Chennai in 1990 to Luke Anthon Charles, an employee of Indian Railways and Mary Padmaja, a home maker, Beno proved to be an exceptional student despite her handicap. She finished her schooling from Little Flower School in Chennai, a centre for the visually challenged, and went on to get her Bachelor's degree in English from Stella Maris College and her Master's from Loyola College, Chennai. Beno was in the 11th Standard when she decided that she wanted to become an officer of the Indian Civil Services.

Beno's parents had a crucial role in her success as they left no stone unturned to help their daughter achieve her dreams, spending all their savings in buying books and taking her to all coaching classes that she wanted to attend. Beno's mother would spend hours reading to her daughter, preparing her for her exams.

It was in 2014 that Beno cracked the coveted UPSC exams. However, despite scoring an impressive all-India 343 rank and excelling in her interview, the orders were not issued in the pretext of some rules. Beno approached the ruling party and all politicians across the spectrum to accelerate the process. Finally, the Central Government decided to bend some rules to induct Beno.

Beno believes that the secret behind her success was the fact that she never treated her disability as a setback, though it would probably have been if she considered it so. She accepted herself the way she was and chose to weave her life around this fact.

Today, Beno wants her story to inspire many more differently-abled people who shy away from living their dreams due to want of support or infrastructure. She believes that more audio books and books in Braille should be made available so that more and more visually challenged people can study and rise in life. Apart from the government, common people should also pitch in. According to Beno, the differently-abled also have ambitions and emotions, and one should respect that.

