



### **A Voice Out of Poverty: The Power to Achieve Through Adversity - By Haslam, Jillian**

Haslam's memoir is a moving and ultimately uplifting account of rising above the most hardscrabble conditions. The memoir begins with the Haslam family moving into relative comfort in Dum Dum after spending life on the harsh Calcutta streets, but their stay is short-lived, and the family soon returns to deprivation. Jillian's father suffers a heart attack, and her mother is forced to live with her minor girls under a staircase, harrowing circumstances leavened only by the family's love for each other. Things look up slightly when, back from hospital, the father finds a job and rents a one-room home, but malnutrition and hunger continue to plague the family. Jillian and her sister Vanessa are admitted to a boarding school as sponsored students, struggling to fit in among the affluent, but the birth of a younger sibling keeps life as tough as ever.

Haslam criticizes the discriminatory treatment meted out to Anglo-Indians like her in Indian society. Her love for her parents and siblings illuminates the narrative: "I am proud to say I had a mother who withstood what no woman should go through in her lifetime," she writes. The story of her childhood illustrates the kindness and generosity of those who don't have much themselves, and it's clear throughout that Haslam wants a better life not just for herself but for others too. Her determination and diligence in the face of insurmountable obstacles are matched by her steely resolve to help others as much as possible.

Haslam's prose is straightforward and to the point, and her storytelling sparkles because of its inherent honesty. Her love and concern are not limited just to her parents but extend to all human beings in need of help. What's most striking is not only that Haslam overcomes crippling poverty, but she does so without rancor or resentment, as her experiences seem to have left no trace of bitterness in her heart. The memoir is testimony to the indomitable human spirit.

**Takeaway:** A moving and uplifting memoir about one woman and her family's battle against soul-crushing poverty.

**Great for fans of:** Katherine P. Manley's *Don't Tell'em You're Cold*, Bruce Johnson's *Surviving Deep Waters*.

#### **Production grades**

**Cover:** A

**Design and typography:** A

**Illustrations:** N/A

**Editing:** B

**Marketing copy:** A

**booklife**  
by Publishers Weekly