

Outlook

Read • Think • Understand



Dr Mariazeena Johnson



Dr Nafeesa Ahmed



Ramya Parashar



Dr Somdutta Singh



Manju Yagnik



Kiran Majumder Shaw



Deepika Jindal



Dr Manjula Pooja Shroff



Sandhya Devanathan



Radhika Agarwal



Poly Patnaik



Minati Sabat



Sumita Dawra



Juturu Keerthi Reddy



Maninder Kapoor Puri



Prof Manoshi Roy Chowdhury



Sandeepa Kanitkar



Anita Lal



Sowmya Chanda



Perna Rajpal



Dr Archana Mantri



Nandini Piramal



Arpita Vinay



Sweta C Saxena



Daisy Chittilapilly



Prativa Mohapatra



Dr Shalya Raj



Anupriya Acharya



Dr Sohini Sastri



Nishaba Godrej



Deepika Chalasani



Dr Swetapadma Dash



Isha Ambani



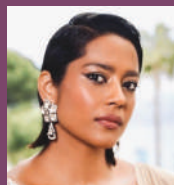
Pooja Ray



Shefali Goradia



Sunita Williams



Sahana Goswami



Schauna Chauhan



Franziska Ohnsorge



Irina Ghose

Women Torchbearers of Viksit Bharat



Accelerate Action

Outlook recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of extraordinary women achievers who have defied social barriers, overcome obstacles, and motivated others to rewrite the future narrative

Imagine a gender equal world; A world free of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that embraces diversity, fairness, and inclusivity! The global theme for International Women's Day 2025 is 'Accelerate Action.' It aims to raise awareness about discrimination. Emphasising the importance of taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality, it calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

Women leaders are consistently demonstrating their capabilities as entrepreneurs, educators, technologists, innovators, finance

experts, art enthusiasts, and influencers. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, a prominent global business figure and the founder of Biocon, which is India's first biopharmaceutical enterprise; entrepreneur Deepika Jindal, who has turned stainless steel into a high-end lifestyle brand; and edupreneur Dr Mariazeena Johnson, who passionately advocates for higher education and community empowerment, are among those who aspire to achieve great things. Juturu Keerthi Reddy, the founder of several brands, utilizes her resources to create job opportunities for women to achieve self-sufficiency, while as a politician, she tirelessly works to bring about societal change.

Technocrats like Ramya Parashar are reshaping the landscape of digital marketing and programmatic trading and Daisy Chittilapilly is spearheading digital transformation and long-term growth. Sandeepa Kanitkar, who established a microbial company, is dedicated to enhancing the lives of farmers through the sustainable application of microbial technology.

Outlook proudly showcases women who 'accelerate action' in its true essence. This issue presents inspiring stories of real individuals that will motivate countless minds and impact the upcoming generation of women and girls to become agents of meaningful change. Together, we can pave the way for gender equality.

A Visionary Leader Transforming Education

Revolutionizing K-12 Learning Through Equity, Excellence, and Next-Gen Education



Dr Nafeesa Ahmed, Director, Presidency Group of Institutions

Dr Nafeesa Ahmed has redefined K-12 education through her visionary leadership. Guided by the philosophy of "Equal Opportunity in Diversity," she champions inclusive, high-quality education that empowers students from all backgrounds. Under her stewardship, the Presidency Schools has become synonymous with academic excellence, equipping students with cutting-edge knowledge, industry-ready skills, & resilient mindset to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Upholding a Legacy of Educational Excellence

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed honors the legacy of her father, Dr. Nissar Ahmed, who founded Presidency Group in 1976 to provide quality education. Committed to his vision, she upholds time-relevant teaching and research, ensuring equal opportunities for all while preserving the institution's core values and academic excellence.

Decade of Dynamic Leadership and Innovation

With over decade of experience, Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed has embraced a dynamic journey, gaining invaluable insights into strategic decision-

making, curriculum development, and institutional growth. Her leadership was instrumental in transitioning the Presidency Schools from traditional classrooms to blended learning environments during the pandemic, ensuring uninterrupted education. She leads a team of dedicated educators committed to delivering exceptional learning outcomes.

Overcoming Challenges in Education

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed's leadership journey has been filled with challenges. She emphasizes the need for continuous growth, innovation, and motivation while balancing academic excellence with affordability. Staying ahead in an evolving sector requires adaptability, vigilance, and a strong commitment to inspiring educators and aligning institutional goals with innovation.

Transforming Education Through Innovation

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed's transformative approach has reshaped the Presidency Schools curriculum and teaching methodologies. She highlights the widespread acceptance of the evolving curriculum by teachers and parents as a significant achievement,

reflecting the institution's commitment to education. Under her leadership, the Presidency Schools has transitioned from rote learning to an experiential, skills-based approach that nurtures students holistically.

Awards and Recognitions

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed has earned many global recognitions, like "Education Icon of the Year 2024" by Education Today and "Education Leader of the Year 2024" by Education World. She was featured as "The Most Visionary Leader Empowering the Educational Sector 2024" by CIO Times Magazine and honored with the "Spirit of Enterprise Award" at the Global Education Awards 2023.

A Vision for Tomorrow: Inspiring Generation

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed's journey is a testament to her vision, resilience, and unwavering commitment to academic excellence. As she continues to lead, her focus remains on innovating curriculum, enhancing teaching methodologies, and fostering leadership skills among students, ensuring every child is equipped to thrive in a competitive, dynamic world.



Daisy Chittilapilly
President, Cisco's India & SAARC theatre

A Talent Pipeline for Digital India

India has emerged as a global leader in the digital landscape, and with a proven track record of transforming operations and cultures, Daisy Chittilapilly is spearheading scalable growth

Cisco India stands as one of the oldest IT skills-to-jobs initiatives globally. Daisy Chittilapilly, who brings nearly 30 years of experience in the technology sector, including two decades in leadership roles at Cisco, oversees strategy, sales, operations, and investments aimed at fostering long-term growth in the area.

Prior to her current role, Daisy was the Managing Director of Cisco's Digital Transformation Office, where she assisted clients in seizing emerging digital opportunities. Furthermore, as the head of Software & Services Sales, she collaborated with partners to hasten Cisco's shift towards software and subscription-

based offerings. In earlier roles, she held leadership positions in Cisco's Enterprise & Commercial businesses, Strategy & Operations, and Partner Organization. Earlier, Daisy has worked in various sales management capacities at Wipro Limited.

When she assumed the role of President of Cisco, India and SAARC, India was on the verge of digital transformation and recovering from the second wave of Covid-19. The company was undergoing a significant global transition—moving from a traditional hardware-focused model to software and subscription-based offerings. Her guidance played a crucial role in advancing Cisco's aim to positively impact 50 million lives in

India by 2025 through investments in startups and skills initiatives.

Cisco's country digitization acceleration program is supporting 51 digital projects across various sectors, including agriculture and aquaculture, infrastructure, and the digitization of processes for Indian seaports and inland waterways. It is also training students in emerging technologies like AI/ML and cybersecurity. Since its inception, the initiative has trained 10.5 lakh students. Under her leadership, India has become one of Cisco's top-performing markets worldwide, with the company establishing its first manufacturing facility in Chennai, aiming for \$1 billion-plus annually in exports and domestic production.

Chittilapilly has completed 120 investments in areas such as 5G, transportation, manufacturing, agriculture and logistics under its Country Digital Acceleration Program. In June 2024, Cisco Investments, the global venture investment arm of the company, announced the launch of a \$1 billion AI Investment fund. It has already committed nearly \$200 million. "We recognise we have a responsibility to mitigate potential harm. That is why we have developed a Responsible AI Framework," Daisy said.

Daisy is part of the Executive Council for NASSCOM and serves as Co-Chair of the FICCI National Committee for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation. She is also a member of the governing body at Woxsen University and an advisory board member for the non-profit organization 'Dragonflies Everywhere'.

Daisy earned her BTech from the College of Engineering, Trivandrum, and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in General Management from XLRI, Jamshedpur. She is dedicated to empowering youth to enter the technology field and mentoring startups to devise technological solutions for pressing social issues.

Breaking Barriers, Building Futures

A woman leader in tech, Ramya Parashar is passionately and successfully steering her journey in programmatic industry to make a big impact

If there's one thing my journey has taught me, it's that leadership is not about waiting for doors to open—it's about building them yourself. Over the past 22 years, I've navigated industries, challenges, and expectations, not by following the rules, but by redefining them.

I began my career in the Technology domain and Operations, where I spent more than a decade building strategies that helped build high-performing teams. However, I never wanted to be in a comfort zone. I leaped into business strategy, go-to-market leadership, and now, as COO of MiQ, I am driving the future of programmatic advertising by bringing together data, technology, and business transformation.

Owning the Narrative

One of the most important lessons that I have learned is that leadership is owning your story unapologetically. I knew early on that waiting for opportunities was not going to be a viable option; instead, it was going to be a self-made path with challenging conventions and proving bold decisions drive bold outcomes. It may have been on-prem migration to cloud, GTM strategies, scaling new monetization models, or accelerating MiQ's growth. The point is that you never shy away from taking risks.



Ramya Parashar, COO, MiQ

Breaking Barriers, Not Bending to Them

Women leaders often hear, "Can you have it all?" The real question is: Who defines what "all" looks like? I have built my career raising twins, shattering the myth that ambition and motherhood cannot coexist. I advocate for workplaces that don't force women to choose between success and family but empower them to embrace both.

Leadership Is a Mindset, Not a Title

I believe leadership is not about hierarchy—it's about impact. It's about ensuring teams thrive, not

just function. At MiQ, I'm driving a culture where high performance coexists with well-being, where innovation is fueled by diversity, and where people take ownership of their growth.

As the digital world evolves, so do the challenges. But I don't believe in just navigating change—I believe in leading it. The future belongs to those who dare to challenge the norm, take the tough calls, and shape what's next.

And if there's one message I want to leave behind, it's this: Be bold. Be relentless. And never wait for permission to lead.



Dr Mariazeena Johnson
Chancellor, Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology

Grit, Gumption and Goals

A role model for social reforms, Dr Mariazeena Johnson advocates for quality education, vocational training and equal rights and opportunities for women and girls

Q According to you, how can the government accelerate women's empowerment?

The ongoing government initiatives towards women's empowerment are extremely beneficial. However, there is scope for further enhancement, especially for rural women. Handholding schemes for single mothers, more funding opportunities and guidance for women entrepreneurs, welfare and health

schemes for women, and particularly health and hygiene protection schemes for those above 10 years of age are some of the long-term initiatives that can improve the condition of women at the grassroots. Insurance schemes for war widows and migrant female labourers help in making them self-sufficient. As an educator, I strongly believe that 'educate and empower' schemes for girls who leave school from standard

8 onwards will help in preparing the next generation of empowered women who are financially secure.

Q How are you fostering women's empowerment in the education sector?

It is imperative that empowerment is a long-term process and not a one-time plan. A larger vision and pragmatic approaches will lead to sustainable women's empowerment in any sector. A strong woman is an asset to her family, thereby to society. Reforms should therefore be directed primarily to empower the woman in a family by any scheme at a state or national level before implementing a holistic approach. The responsibility of implementation through smaller groups and local administration can be reviewed and monitored by the district authorities, perhaps at a nodal centre level.

The education sector has a vast scope of empowerment right from the foundation level.

As the chancellor of Sathyabama, I ensure that women are taken into account while drawing any model or policy for implementation. As an institution, we provide annual 'seed money grants' to women entrepreneurs in equal proportion to their male counterparts.

Due weightage and preference are given for women recruitment and encouragement at hierarchical positions in the institution. We understand that financially empowered women are an asset not only to the family but also to societal progress. 70 percent of our faculty are women, and 85 percent of them are holding top hierarchical positions. Various schemes related to health, hygiene, education, and employment opportunities for women, such as the Anbu Scholarship Scheme, Madugai-The Strength, and Anbu She First, etc., were introduced to cater to women's needs at multiple levels.

Q AI and technology being an integral part of our lives, how can such interventions contribute to women's empowerment?

Today, life is continually getting better with the appropriate use of technology. Artificial intelligence (AI) is not an exception, as it is typically used as a predictive tool. AI technology will be widely utilised to comprehend and forecast the safety and security measures at work, while travelling to unfamiliar locations, in uncertain climatic circumstances, to provide career guidance, and to mitigate obstacles that can be accurately addressed by technology.

We must acknowledge that determination, undeterred focus on goal and resilience are the key aspects towards making full use of digital technology for empowering the human race. Specifically, towards the concern of women, SHGs (Self Help Groups) are there to take up the challenge of empowering other women in society related to digital literacy, making effective usage of technology. Academic institutions, the government and NGOs have the capacity to hand-hold this process at all possible levels. Everywhere and whenever practicable, technological intervention should be incorporated to improve the lives of women in society. However, due care must be taken in training women while using such technology for best results.

Q What are the various initiatives of Sathyabama towards gender sensitisation and inclusion?

To create an environment of equality where all women and girls have equal rights, power, and opportunities, it is the role of education institutions to raise awareness among students to understand systemic barriers and biases that women face, the need to empower young women and girls to be catalysts for change, to address critical issues like violence, discrimination, and exploitation.

At Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, gender equality and equity are of utmost importance. Women's empowerment is one of the key pillars of success for the institution. Our staff and students participate in gender-sensitisation training programmes on a regular basis. I always recommend that the value of women is not to be taught theoretically but to be practiced for better results in society. Through implementation of case studies, workshops, collaborations and projects as part of the curricula, awareness, accountability, respect for women and the concept of equal opportunities are instilled in the students.

The Women Empowerment Bureau conducts several programmes that aids in economic empowerment and social upliftment of underprivileged women. Our educational model is inclusive. We take special interest in designing programmes related to awareness of equality and gender studies. Periodically, workshops, seminars, contests, awareness campaigns, rallies, and advice programs are held to raise awareness of gender sensitisation. We provide equal value and chances to all segments of society, including the poor, the disenfranchised, the war widows, the children of prisoners, the orphans, and the marginalised. We are already in the process of encouraging the weaker segments of society to pursue education, which is

"A STRONG WOMAN IS AN ASSET TO HER FAMILY, THEREBY TO SOCIETY. REFORMS SHOULD THEREFORE BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY TO EMPOWER THE WOMAN IN A FAMILY BY ANY SCHEME AT A STATE OR NATIONAL LEVEL BEFORE IMPLEMENTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH"

the larger component of our vision for the future.

As an institution, we are continuously striving to inspire others through our ideology, initiatives at every level of administration, and workforce involvement, to understand and value women and their work to forge a better world.

Q Since women's empowerment is a continuous process, how do you make your initiatives sustainable?

Conviction is the key to maintaining sustainability in any sector. Sustainability is a specific objective that is achieved when we are resolute and explicit in our choices and establish a strategy to back up the concept. I support this process and build teams with work ethics that motivate them to complete any task successfully over an extended length of time. When its people are trusted and supported, an institution becomes powerful. This is my formula for success; I always provide my team with the necessary moral, emotional, and advanced infrastructure support.

Q As a leader, what is your message to girls who are aspiring for success?

'Those who face are in the race' is the motto to not be in self-doubt when faced with challenges. Independent thinking and actions are rudimentary aspects for aspirants. The mantra to success is to always aim high!

To become a successful professional, you must focus on developing a clear vision, building a strong network, honing your financial literacy, cultivating confidence, adapting to change, understanding your target audience, and consistently learning and developing new skills, while being resilient in the face of challenges. Channelise your efforts towards reaping results. Your conviction and courage will make you successful; they are the best friends in hard times.



Kiran Mazumdar Shaw
Founder & Chairperson Biocon

Blazing trails, shaping the future

Founder and chairperson of a leading pharmaceutical company, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw is known as a thought leader committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in India's business ecosystem

One of India's most successful business leaders, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, founder and chairperson of Biocon, India's largest biopharmaceutical company, has been transformative force for the biotechnology industry. From a young, aspiring entrepreneur to a global business icon, her story is an inspiring one of overcoming challenges and breaking barriers.

The Starting Point

Shaw studied brewing at Ballarat College in Australia after attaining her undergraduate degree in biology from Bangalore University. Limited opportunities for women in the industry necessitated her shift to biotechnology, then a rapidly growing field. However, the nascent state of the industry in India posed challenges in securing

employment. Undeterred, she started her own company.

Building Biocon

In 1978, Shaw founded Biocon India with a modest investment of just ₹10,000. Initially, the company focused on producing enzymes for the brewing and textile industries. Clever diversification of its product portfolio to include biopharmaceuticals, such as insulin and immunosuppressants, led to the company's growth. Shaw's leadership made Biocon a global player in the biotechnology sector, with a reach of over 120 countries.

Breaking Barriers

Shaw's firsthand experience of the challenges women face in a male-dominated industry strengthened her commitment to creating not just a more diverse and inclusive

workplace but a more equitable business ecosystem.

The resistance she encountered in the early days of her career strengthened her persistence. Her success has also played a crucial role in changing perceptions about women in business and entrepreneurship. She has been vocal about her struggles as a woman entrepreneur, the ways she overcame the biases, and has used her own experiences to mentor and inspire the next generation of women leaders.

Walking the Talk

Shaw strongly believes that diversity is a key driver of innovation. At Biocon, Shaw has taken concrete and consistent steps to promote gender equality by hiring women at all levels of the organization. Initiatives are in place to support the professional development of women employees, including leadership training and mentorship programmes.

An Advocate's Role

Shaw's success has earned her numerous accolades and recognition, both in India and internationally. Named one of the world's most influential women by Forbes, she is also a Padma Bhushan awardee, one of India's highest civilian honours. However, her legacy extends beyond business.

A vocal advocate for diversity and inclusivity across India's business landscape, Shaw's encouragement of other business leaders to provide equal opportunities for women and marginalized groups is well known. A strong proponent of women's economic empowerment, Shaw has been involved in several initiatives for improving access to education, healthcare, and employment for women.

Shaw's legacy as a businesswoman is not just defined by the growth of Biocon, but also by the lasting impact she has made on creating a more inclusive and equitable business ecosystem.

Revolutionizing Real Estate Leadership

Manju Yagnik's exceptional career blends strategic innovation, inspiring green living, and advocacy for women's leadership, inspiring the next generation of industry pioneers

A trailblazer in India's dynamic real estate landscape, Yagnik is a beacon of visionary leadership and unwavering determination. Rising from humble beginnings to become the driving force behind the Nahar Group, she has redefined industry standards while shattering glass ceilings in a traditionally male-dominated field. Her story, marked by resilience and innovation, inspires countless women to pursue their ambitions and excel in competitive business environments. Her strong leadership as the Vice Chairperson of Nahar Group has elevated Nahar Group into a formidable force—boasting over approximately 20 million square feet of developed space and providing homes for more than 12,000 residents—but has also redefined what it means to lead in an industry long dominated by men.

Recognising the untapped potential of global investments, she pioneered outreach initiatives across key international markets—USA, UK, UAE, Hong Kong, and Singapore—thereby positioning Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) as a significant clientele and broadening the company's horizons.

Embodying her visionary commitment to sustainable urban development, Yagnik is at the

forefront of championing green living in Mumbai. Her latest initiative, the Miyawaki Forest (Nahar Amrit Shakti Udyan) at Nahar's Amrit Shakti, in collaboration with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, stands as a testament to her resolve to transform urban environments into lush, verdant sanctuaries. Leveraging the innovative Miyawaki method—a pioneering afforestation technique that fosters rapid, dense, and biodiverse growth of native flora—this project is poised to create a thriving ecological oasis within the bustling city. By integrating eco-conscious design principles into one of Mumbai's landmark developments, Her efforts resonate deeply with the broader movement towards a green living, inspiring communities and industry leaders alike to embrace green living.

Yagnik is celebrated for her tireless commitment to advancing women's empowerment. She has consistently challenged societal norms by not only excelling in a competitive arena but by actively

championing policies that foster financial independence among women. Concerned about the growing inventory levels, she spoke to the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra and former Chief Minister, Shri Eknath Shinde, urging him to consider additional concessions on stamp duty registrations for female buyers. She highlighted that such initiatives would enhance women's financial independence, stimulate real estate demand, and ease the inventory pressure.

Her influence extends well beyond corporate boardrooms. As an active member and leader in prestigious industry organisations such as NAREDCO, CREDAI, MCHI, FICCI, and RICS, Yagnik is pivotal in shaping standards and practices across the sector. Her contributions as Senior Vice President of NAREDCO Maharashtra have enhanced transparency, governance, and reform, further solidifying her reputation as a true thought leader.



Manju Yagnik, Vice Chairperson, Nahar Group & Sr Vice President NAREDCO, Maharashtra



Nandini Piramal
Chairperson, Piramal Pharma Limited

Shaping the future

Credibility, passion and dedication are three words that best describe Nandini Piramal's trajectory as an Indian, rather global business leader. Born into the illustrious Piramal family in 1980, she has carved her own path, integrating privilege with purpose to compelling effect

There is no doubt that Nandini Piramal, the As Executive Director of Piramal Enterprises Limited and Chairperson of Piramal Pharma Ltd., was profoundly influenced by her parents, Ajay and Swati Piramal, both stalwarts in the business and healthcare sectors. Their entrepreneurial energy as well as their dedicated community service instilled in her a sense of purpose.

Academic excellence was only one of the aspects – after earning a Bachelor's degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics from Oxford University in 2001, she attended the Stanford Graduate School of Business, where she obtained her MBA in 2006. These years were instrumental in equipping her with a global perspective and a robust foundation in business principles.

The Career Path

Nandini's professional journey started with a stint at McKinsey & Company in 2003, a position that honed her analytical and strategic skills. In 2006, she joined the family business, bringing fresh insights and energy. As the leader of the Over-The-Counter (OTC) division, she was a driver in making it one of India's fastest-growing segments, with several brands achieving top market positions. Her strategic vision was instrumental in the landmark sale of Piramal Healthcare's branded generics segment to Abbott Laboratories in 2010, a deal valued at \$3.8 billion.

Nandini oversees the Human Resources and Information Technology functions across the Piramal Group. She is credited with spearheading a comprehensive five-

year transformation initiative aimed at talent identification and development, in order to foster a culture of excellence and inclusivity. Her leadership in quality assurance and risk management has been pivotal in upholding the group's reputation for integrity and reliability.

The Social Quotient

Nandini's commitment to social causes is as deep as her pursuit of business excellence. As an advisor to the Piramal Foundation, she champions initiatives in healthcare, education, and water accessibility. Under her guidance, Piramal Sarvajal, a social enterprise dedicated to providing clean drinking water, has expanded its reach to over 750,000 individuals across 20 Indian states – a remarkable achievement that not only addresses a critical need but also empowers communities through sustainable solutions.

In Recognition

In 2014, she was honoured by the World Economic Forum as a 'Young Global Leader,' acknowledging her potential to shape the future of global industries. Business Today recognized her as one of 'India's Most Powerful Women' in both 2020 and 2022, underscoring her influence in the corporate realm.

With a leadership philosophy deeply rooted in the values of ethics, culture, and inclusivity, Nandini is a champion of true diversity that transcends numerical representation, emphasizing the importance of varied perspectives in driving innovation and growth. This ethos permeates the Piramal Group, fostering an environment where talent thrives.

Future Forward

Nandini's journey is a compelling narrative of leveraging privilege with purpose. Her seamless integration of business leadership with social responsibility is a significant example for corporate India.

Inspiring Next Gen Women Leaders

A dynamic leader, an astute entrepreneur, and a relentless advocate for the people, Keerthi Reddy is the spirit of modern leadership



Juturu Keerthi Reddy, Entrepreneur, Senior Leader, BJP - Telangana

Q As a woman leader from Telangana, how is your journey in the political landscape?

Politics is not an easy job, whether it is for men or women. As a woman entering politics, it is even more challenging in spite of a focus on equal opportunities for all. Most of the top leaders are men, so there are often mind blocks that a woman may succumb to family responsibilities and may not do justice to crucial roles. So we have to work harder to prove our calibre. I worked diligently, unwavering in my mission of mobilising grassroots campaigns and strengthening the party's presence in the Jubilee Hills constituency. By addressing voter list discrepancies, I am ensuring that Telangana moves toward a permanent, authentic, and verifiable electoral system. My work was recognised, and I was appointed Vice-President of Hyderabad Central District in 2023.

Q What would you like to say about your journey to entrepreneurship?

I founded multiple brands—The Deccan Story, Valka, Fabric Nation, and Keerthi Reddy Label—to generate employment for women to become independent and self-reliant. As a woman, I am sensitive to their cause. In an unorganised sector comprising an uneducated and exploited workforce, I provided them with training and skill development. I observed that the weavers were employed on daily wages, making them financially insecure.

I streamlined the system in Hyderabad by placing them into a payroll system with fixed salaries and eligibility for PF. It took almost 5 years of running this system for other designers to adopt it as pressure was building up for them and they were not getting skilled employees. In the hospitality sector, I started Kadali, an authentic Telugu kitchen in Banjara Hills, celebrating the rich culinary heritage of the region.

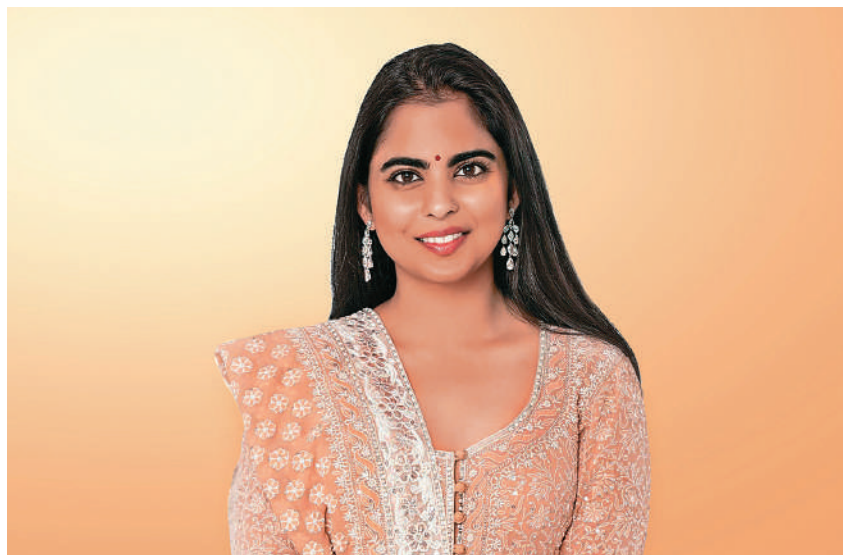
Q What is your message for aspiring young women entrepreneurs?

Consistency is the key to success.

The word 'not possible' is not in my dictionary. I keep trying until it is possible! I started my business with Rs 50,000 in 2003. In the course of time, I have been consistently working and being positive. Today, we have over 1600 employees. I take up societal issues and keep fighting for those. I urge young girls and women to not give up hope. If you believe that you are fighting for the right cause, someday it will happen.

Q What are your future plans?

Cheers Foundation champions the cause of the elderly and orphans; Weave a Dream Foundation works toward integrating technology into handloom textiles; the Keerthi Reddy Foundation spearheads medical camps, financial assistance programs, educational support, and employment initiatives for underprivileged communities; these are initiatives that I will continue towards societal transformation. I wish to use my political career to contribute to future policies and systems for society's benefit and continue my fight for the cause of women.



Isha Ambani
Director RIL, Reliance Retail & Reliance JIO Infocomm

Of focus, faith and family

Focused vision, exceptional education, a legacy of entrepreneurial leadership and of commitment to society makes Isha Ambani a name to watch out for in the years to come

As the daughter of business tycoon Mukesh Ambani, Isha Ambani has big boots to fill. And she's not shying away from the challenge. With every step, she is gaining attention for her business acumen and also her commitment to social causes.

The Education Factor

A blend of global exposure, with strong foundations in business best describes Isha's educational trajectory. After graduating with a degree in Psychology and South Asian Studies from Yale University, one of the world's most prestigious institutions, she went on to get an MBA from Stanford University. Yale shaped Isha's analytical thinking and broadened her cultural perspective,

while grounding her with a comprehensive understanding of both business and human behaviour. Her time at both Yale and Stanford also provided her with the opportunity to engage with some of the brightest minds globally, a likely factor in her ability to navigate complex business landscapes.

The Business of Family

Isha joined her family business, Reliance Industries, and quickly became one of the driving forces behind the conglomerate's many successful ventures. Her focus on digital business, retail, and technological advancements reflects her education and expertise. She has been driving the expansion of Reliance Retail into new categories, geographies and

formats, with a laser focus on enhancing customer experience. She has led the growth of the digital footprint for Reliance Retail, launched new formats such as the eCommerce business Ajio, as well as the omni-channel beauty platform Tira. Her role in the growth of Reliance Jio, India's largest telecom company, has also earned her widespread praise.

In Recognition

Isha has received the prestigious GenNext Entrepreneur Award at the Forbes India Leadership Awards 2023. She has been named in TIME magazine's TIME100 Next list of rising stars from across industries around the world. Isha's ability to lead teams and manage diverse portfolios, while staying ahead of market trends, marks her as a leader to watch out for.

Responsibility in Power

Beyond business, Isha Ambani is involved in philanthropic and social causes, aligned with the values of her family's commitment to social responsibility. Isha has actively spearheaded Diversity and Inclusion initiatives at Reliance, such as the formation of a Group-wide D&I Council to formulate a clear roadmap towards a more equitable and inclusive ecosystem.

Isha is also involved in initiatives under the Reliance Foundation, led by her mother, Nita Ambani. As an art aficionado, she leads all the art and culture initiatives undertaken by Reliance Foundation in India and internationally. She is deeply committed to the cause of education for all and spearheads Reliance Foundation's work with children and women.

Into the Future

A combination of stellar education, deep commitment, and a strong sense of social responsibility makes Isha a changemaker of the future in the Indian business ecosystem.



Deepika Jindal
Creative Director & MD, Jindal Lifestyle Limited
Chairperson, Jindal Stainless Foundation

Art in Stainless Steel

Transforming stainless steel as an expression of art, Deepika Jindal has pioneered premium lifestyle products blending the classical with contemporary

How did you carve your niche as a businesswoman in a male-dominated heavy manufacturing industry like stainless steel?

It started with an idea! However, aesthetically designed lifestyle products in stainless steel were a new concept in the late 90s, as the consumers perceived the metal as cheap and commonplace. Initially, I faced challenges in finding the right design team and production capability to replicate my ideas or diagrams into a product-3D. Jindal Stainless Limited, the parent company, manufactures stainless steel material, but this was uncharted territory for them. Singularly, I made course corrections, and by 2001, with my husband's support, I started a factory. Through in-house production, I could

control quality standards, unique design, and product patent.

Artd'inox, a brand of Jindal Lifestyle Limited, was launched in 2003. We ventured into multi-brand outlets and opened our own flagship stores on high streets in major metros. The next hurdle was high rentals, and we were not making enough to cover the cost. We were ambitious and had scaled very fast while perception was still low. In 2008, to meet production capacity and sustainable income, we ventured into B2B products like mixer bowls and grinders for the KitchenAid brand of Whirlpool for the US market. I have never digressed from stainless steel, though there were options of changing the concept and adding other materials to upscale. Over the years, Artd'inox has created

interesting stainless steel products with unique finishes and carved its niche for its premium product range.

What are your approaches to promote artistic manifestation of stainless steel?

I feel creativity is individualistic, and each one brings in their own element. Coming from an affluent background and through travels, I have gained insight into art, creativity, and design of global standards. My design ethos and the market requirement come together in the products.

I evaluate my own designs from the perspective of a buyer, and not as their custodian. If I were to purchase it at a certain price point, would it be relevant in our Indian homes? It reflects a shared ideology with my designers while creating products. We brainstorm on pricing to make our designs affordable. While the focus is on aesthetics, we ensure that they are functional and user-friendly.

What are the various initiatives that you have spearheaded towards women's empowerment?

The Jindal Stainless Foundation is committed to transforming the communities residing near its steel plants across different geographies. An inspiring initiative is Asmita, a women-led production center. It initially provided skills development, sourcing, product design, and marketing. It is now a successful micro-enterprise in the production of safety jackets, college uniforms, and masks. Another such initiative is supporting women of Trijanga village for production of Sahaja, low-cost sanitary napkins. Awareness campaigns and learning projects in Haryana, 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao,' are focused on empowering women. I have collaborated with reputed national and international civil societies and nongovernment organizations to implement impactful initiatives.



Nisaba Godrej
Executive Chairperson of Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL), Indian entrepreneur

Unlocking International Markets for Godrej

Fierce leadership and strategic planning forges GCPL to greater international and domestic market expansion

Well-known as the woman who bought the popular Kamasutra and Park Avenue deodorant and sexual wellness brands from Raymonds into her company's folds, Nisaba Godrej has further strengthened Godrej's position in the market as a comprehensive FMCG company from India with a global footprint.

With the deodorant market segment growing rapidly at the rate of 10% CAGR per year, this acquisition deal of a stupendous Rs2,825 crore in 2023 from Raymond Consumer Care (RCC) to Godrej Consumer Products (GCPL) is reaping in the profits.

For the past two decades, Nisaba Godrej, as the Executive Chairperson of the company has been the fountainhead of strategic and sustainable growth of one of

India's most trusted consumer brand names. Once a portfolio of brands that underperformed, Nisaba has always focused on turning this setback into a win. In 2024, GCP was firmly put back on track with a year-on-year growth of 5.9%, and revenue in December 2024 was Rs. 141.5 billion.

She is currently a board member of many stellar organizations such as S Mahindra & Mahindra, VIP Industries and Godrej Agrovet, Teach for India, and many others.

As a Chairperson for the Teach for India project, Nisaba Godrej has rallied hard for the cause of better education access for underprivileged children across India by creating safe education spaces. Currently spread across 9 cities, it has around 28,000 students benefiting directly from the initiative and 50 million more

benefiting in some form or the other.

Nisaba as the daughter of Adi and Parmeshwar Godrej, succeeded her father as the Executive Chairperson, taking on the mantle to lead one of India's oldest companies that is well over 120 years. Not just a business leader, but as the mother of two children, she has focused on making the company an extremely woman-friendly workplace.

From a consumer product manufacturer known for hair dyes and soaps, Nisaba accelerated Godrej's portfolio expansion into many other FMCG products that are now household names globally such as Goodknight, Cinthol soap, Cockroach Killer, Hit and so many others.

Across the globe in so many houses, there are useful daily-use products from one of India's biggest conglomerates as their international footprint is almost half of the company's sales revenues. She was the sole driver of making Godrej a household name across sub-Saharan Africa with its range of hair and skincare brands specifically for African women.

As a Wharton and Harvard Business School alumni, Nisaba has simplified the company's internal structure and stressed a creative approach led by resonating differently with consumers. As a multi-tasker, she has focussed on Godrej's Group HR functioning, and talent acquisition, spearheading the Group's Good & Green agenda and the Godrej DEI Lab to drive more inclusive and sustainable growth.

With her focus on value-based tangible productivity and equality, she has locked in an opportunity-led sustainable work environment for the company. Despite her high-profile position of power and her busy work life, the mother of two is passionate about academics, mental health, and all things equestrian. She has turned out to be a true Godrej - reliable, successful, and philanthropic at heart.

Wealth Management Redefined

Arpita Vinay creating sustainable growth and value for stakeholders through leadership, technical expertise and innovative approaches



Arpita Vinay, Managing Director and Co-CEO, Spark PWM

In an industry often defined by traditional financial backgrounds, Arpita Vinay's path to becoming a leading figure in India's wealth management sector stands apart. As Managing Director and Co-CEO of Spark Private Wealth Management (PWM), she has orchestrated a remarkable transformation that began with an unexpected foundation: electrical engineering.

Vinay's journey commenced at Tata Steel's Jamshedpur plant, where she led a team of 40 as an engineer. This technical background, combined with an MBA in Finance from FMS Delhi, would later prove invaluable in her acclaimed leadership journey.

After her MBA, she joined HSBC as a management trainee and rose through the ranks rapidly to be its Head of Premier Banking and overseeing one of India's largest affluent banking propositions. At HSBC India, she was rated among the top 3% of employees with an EDC (Executive Development Centre) Ranking of 1 in 2010 and identified as a part of the Country Talent Pool.

Later, as Managing Director and

Co-Head of Centrum Wealth, she was responsible for providing strategic direction to the firm and taking the firm to a leading position in the business.

In 2023, Vinay took on her current role as Managing Director and Co-CEO at Spark PWM. Under her leadership, the firm has seen extraordinary growth, with assets under management crossing USD 3 billion. Spark PWM is already 400-member strong with some of the most seasoned private bankers and a very experienced products and ideation team dropping anchor with the firm.

At Spark, she has masterfully drawn upon and integrated Spark Group's track record and capabilities - ranging from investment banking to equity research and asset management and thus created an ecosystem that structures and delivers a rich suite of solutions, products and services for high-net-worth individuals, corporate treasuries and family offices.

Vinay holds a STEP Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Private Wealth, specializing in cross-border succession, international

taxation, and family business advisory. She has earned her prestigious recognitions, including the World Women Leadership Congress Award and a place among India's Top 100 Women in Finance.

Vinay's leadership philosophy emphasizes building multidisciplinary teams capable of navigating the complex intersection of technology, regulation, and global finance. Her client-centric approach focuses on creating bespoke solutions that integrate diverse domains like investment research and management with wealth planning and investment banking services, while embracing technological innovation to enhance service delivery.

As India's private wealth industry enters the most exciting decade growth and sophistication, Vinay's journey offers valuable insights into how technical expertise, combined with strategic vision and adaptive leadership, can help build a solid, enduring and respected franchise and create significant value for all stakeholders.



Irina Ghosh
Managing Director, Microsoft India and South Asia, Indian IT professional

Leading India towards AI Excellence

Irina Ghosh's vital role propels India's AI-first leadership and then "My Little Bit" more

In January 2025, Microsoft announced a USD 3 billion investment spread over two years to accelerate the growth of India's cloud and AI infrastructure. As the Managing Director of Microsoft India, Irina Ghosh is ready to implement this development with her two decades of leading the South Asian division.

Irina Ghosh is committed to helping India achieve its much-desired AI First Nation status and has planned to train 10 million Indians with AI skills by 2030. Ghosh is excited about Microsoft Research Lab launching the AI Innovation Network designed to speed up the research and testing to usage as soon as possible, impacting business applications for the highest efficiencies and productivity. According to Ghosh, Microsoft wants to be the most important partner in India's journey as the global hub of AI. One of the first concern areas is cyber-security and in 2023, the Secure Future Initiative was launched

in India under her leadership. The high-value division now employs 34,000 full-time engineers and is the biggest project in the history of cybersecurity.

Ghosh is a dyed-the-wool Microsoft team member with 20 years in the organization. In her previous role at Microsoft as the Chief Operating Officer, she has targeted the end-to-end operations, and market-ready strategies and led perhaps the best and biggest sales enablement initiatives in Microsoft's markets. Her commendable achievements in a distinguished career included leadership roles in strategy and sales across Education, Enterprise, Partner solutions, and Enterprise Solutions.

The much-awarded Ghosh has the Microsoft Most Inspirational Woman title as a woman leader who actively promotes women in technology and business. She is a mentor and trustee of SonderConnect, a foundation that assists women's entrepreneurship at

all levels. She has also received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from all her alma maters, IIT, BHU, and XLRI in her portfolio.

Her women empowerment is not just limited to the technology and business sectors and goes directly to the grassroots level to start encouraging girls from underprivileged communities in India, to realize their potential through education and employment.

Ghosh founded My Little Bit for this purpose. Today, My Little Bit has taken a pragmatic philanthropic approach to help girls through five verticals which begins with a donation of uniforms and shoes for girls. Students are kept actively engaged in primary and secondary education while the other school-level verticals helps girls in their 10th grade strengthen their STEM learnings. This is a direct nudge towards greater female participation in these subjects. The Digital Literacy vertical is also a school-level initiative that sets up computer laboratories in government-funded schools to enable learning not only the basics of usage but also programming and coding. The transitioning vertical assists girls leaving government schools for higher education in STEM and business subjects with scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The fifth vertical has been designed for girls studying in colleges with fees less than Rs 30,000 per year to be able to participate in Integrated Skill Development Programmes within their academic curriculum. This enables them to be more employable on graduation and on par with those from more affluent colleges.

India has a distinguished list of women who are committed to not only impacting the national economic growth but also lending a much-needed helping hand to their gender. In this list, Irina Ghosh stands out as a bright beacon of professional and philanthropic success.

A Visionary Beyond Adversity

From overcoming adversity to redefining and transforming Odisha's healthcare landscape, Dr Swetapadma Dash is putting SUMUM and Odisha on the national map

The script of her life could have been different. A childhood accident that took her limb might have shaped a quieter, more withdrawn existence, defined by limitation rather than ambition. But Dr Swetapadma Dash never saw herself through the lens of loss. Instead, she built a life—and a career—on the conviction that adversity does not diminish people; it prepares them.

As the CEO of SUM Ultimate Medicare (SUMUM), she has done more than lead a hospital—she has redefined Odisha's healthcare landscape, bringing SUMUM into national prominence. Healthcare leadership is not for the complacent. It demands agility, foresight, and an unshakable belief that every challenge is an opportunity. Dr Dash has demonstrated all three.

But before SUMUM, before the accolades, before the weight of decisions that shape lives, there was a young girl who wanted to understand the human mind. A Gold Medalist in Clinical Psychology from Mysore University, she began her career in 2007 as a clinical counselor. By 2009, she was at Apollo Hospitals Bhubaneswar, working in Quality Management, Patient Care, Audits, and Research. She didn't just excel; she observed, adapted, and prepared. By 2016, she was DGM of Operations, Quality & Research—a role that placed her at the intersection of administration and innovation.

That's when Prof (Dr) Manojranjan Nayak, Founder & President of Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), took notice. He saw in her a strategist, a leader, someone who understood not just hospital management but the heartbeat of healthcare itself. Even as she climbed the ranks, she pursued her PhD—not as an academic exercise, but as groundwork for the larger responsibilities she knew would come.

In December 2018, she got the call. CEO of SUMUM. A role that placed her at the helm of a 375-bed quaternary care hospital—still under construction, still waiting to become what it was envisioned to be. She was one of the youngest healthcare CEOs in India. If anyone doubted her, they wouldn't for long.

Then came February 2020. SUMUM opened its doors. A month later, the world shut down. While hospitals struggled in the global crisis, SUMUM, under her leadership, set a new standard—safeguarding all with decisive protocols.

Today, SUMUM stands among Eastern India's top hospitals, with 30+ specialties, a 575-bed capacity, and a new wing for international patients, positioning Odisha as a medical tourism hub and earning recognition as the Best Hospital in Eastern India (ET NOW Industry Icons, 2025). But Dr Dash never wanted to build just another hospital. She wanted to create a system—a healthcare model where listening is as important as



Dr Swetapadma Dash, Chief Executive Officer, SUM Ultimate Medicare

diagnosing.

She doesn't believe leadership should come with walls. "The best ideas can come from anyone, anywhere. I am always accessible and happy to listen," she says. This openness has earned her the tag of 'People's CEO.'

But her impact goes beyond SUMUM's walls. She has put Odisha's healthcare sector on the global map by leading SUMUM to host the 4th World Conference on Comprehensive Critical Care and the National Conference on Interventional Radiology—both firsts for the state.

She also spearheaded Odisha's first multi-organ retrieval and transplant from a deceased donor, sparking vital conversations on organ donation.

Recognitions followed: "Business Women Leader of the Year (News18, 2023). Best CEO & Administrator of the Year (Six Sigma Healthcare Excellence Award)", titles that affirm her impact but don't define it.

But for Dr Dash, success is never personal.

"What truly matters is not what we achieve for ourselves, but how we transform the world around us," she says.

Economic Impact and Social Benefits

An international macroeconomics and development specialist with over 25 years of experience, Sweta C Saxena's research has globally influenced thinking about recoveries from crises and recession

Advocating for education as a key enabler and equalizer and the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world, Sweta addresses the pressing issues related to gender equality, poverty alleviation, and social policy within the African context. At the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), she advocates that a human rights and people-centric approach to sustainable development in Africa is key to ensuring that no one is left behind, and this means that women, young people, and vulnerable groups must receive priority attention.

"There is a need for sustained initiatives for marginalized societies to gain educational access in remote villages that lack basic infrastructure; proper sanitation, poverty, and mindset act as hindrances. Free meals, separate toilets, and financial aid at the ground level focus exclusively on sustainable development." Said Sweta.

Sweta C Saxena has held important portfolios such as the Director, Gender, Poverty, and Social Policy Division in Ethiopia, and as the Chief in the Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division at the UN Economic and Social



Sweta C Saxena
Director, Social Development Division,
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. She has led ESCAP's 2019 Flagship report, titled "Ambitions beyond growth," and 2020 Flagship, titled "Towards sustainable economies." At the IMF, she has worked on multilateral surveillance for the G20 countries in the Research Department and on fragile countries in the African Department.

Prior to joining the IMF, she worked at the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland, and as an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Sweta obtained her PhD in economics from the University of Washington and a master's in economics from the Delhi School of Economics.

A prolific researcher with publications in top economics journals (AER, JEL, JIE), Sweta has published extensively, including in the American Economic Review and the Journal of International Economics. Her research has focused on policy-relevant macro-

financial issues, namely, crises and recoveries, contagion, and exchange rates.

"The materialistic Western perspective often assumes that women's value is measured by their participation in the labor force, earning wages, and contributing to a nation's GDP. This dismisses their immense contributions to the household—raising families, nurturing relationships, and shaping society in ways that are invaluable. The early care and upbringing children receive profoundly impact their future success and a nation's overall well-being, influencing everything from career trajectories to crime rates. We all understand how crucial peace and stability are for economic progress." Emphasized Sweta towards a holistic and comprehensive perspective towards growth and social relevance from the perspective of the rich heritage of strong women leaders of ancient India and the current global drive for equality.

Safe Teen Steps

Dr Manjula Pooja Shroff addresses rising mental health crisis among youth and the steps for making a safer, healthier, and happier teenage life through her book 'Safe Teen Steps'

Teenagers suffering from mental health issues are rising. Studies indicate that one in five teenagers has a mental health issue, but do not get help because they are embarrassed, or unsure where to look for support. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded things, and teenagers unable to attend school or meet friends, resorted to screen-time causing stress and loneliness.

Causes of Mental Health Disorders

Students feel 'pressure at school' due to exams, competition, and high expectations from parents and teachers.

Beautiful pictures on 'social media' influence them judge themselves and feel miserable about their own life.

'Peer pressure and identity issues' make teens feel lost and depressed as they try hard to fit in.

'Societal and family expectations' make teens lonely when they think their parents cannot understand them.

'Lack of mental health education' in most schools and communities, students don't learn how to manage emotions.

How Safe Teen Steps Can Help

In such trying times, adolescents must be guided to cope with their emotions and feelings. 'Safe Teen Steps,' written by Dr Shroff, is a helpful book that gives teenagers, parents, and teachers easy ways to handle mental health issues.

What Safe Teen Steps Teaches

Understanding Emotions: The book



Dr Manjula Pooja Shroff, Edupreneur, Author
MD & CEO, Kalorex Group

teaches teenagers recognize their feelings and ways to manage emotions in a healthy way.

Reducing Stress and Anxiety: It shares simple methods like deep breathing, mindfulness, and journaling to help teens stay calm and focused.

Using Social Media Wisely: It explains the problems of too much screen time and how to have a healthy digital life.

Talking Openly with Parents and Teachers: Many teenagers find it hard to talk to adults. This book gives tips on how to begin meaningful conversations and be heard.

Building Confidence and Self-Esteem: The book encourages teenagers to believe in themselves and feel good about who they are.

Helping Friends and Building Supportive Communities: It teaches how to support friends who are struggling with mental health and how to ask for help when needed.

Why This Book is a Must-Read

'Safe Teen Steps' is easy to read and understand. It features real-life stories, simple exercises, and practical advice that teenagers can

use in their daily lives. It educates adolescents on coping skills and helps parents and educators to assist teenagers become happy and confident individuals. 'Safe Teen Steps' is not just a book, but a step in the direction of a mentally healthier future.

About the Author

Dr Manjula Pooja Shroff's knowledge and experience with children of all ages motivated her to address parent's dilemma on ensuring their child's safety in this internet age. The overwhelming response to her first book 'Baby Steps to Big Dreams,' prompted its sequel, 'Safe teen Steps' and an AI-powered Parenting Solutions App - MAPS.

An Executive Alumnus from IIM Ahmedabad, she is a Doctorate in Business Administration, Commonwealth University, London, postgraduate from York University and executive alumnus London School of Economics. She attends global summits like COP28 Dubai; the United Nations ACUNS, Tokyo; ECOSOC New York; the B-20 Summit, Brazil; DIE Australia; and the World Economic Forum Davos.



Dr Franziska Ohnsorge
Chief Economist, South Asia, World Bank

Banking on the Future

Today, Dr Franziska Ohnsorge is one of the most vital names shaping research and policy responses to some of the most pressing economic challenges in the world

As the Chief Economist for the South Asia Region at the World Bank, Dr Franziska Ohnsorge does not have an easy job, especially in today's increasingly volatile geopolitical climate. However, her distinguished decades-long work in public policy, with its focus on addressing key economic issues that influence the development of emerging markets, particularly in South Asia, makes her a uniquely apt candidate for the job.

A Matter of Theory

Dr Ohnsorge earned her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Toronto. Her early career included significant roles at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Bank for Reconstruction

and Development (EBRD), where she focused on fiscal and financial sector policies, savings and consumption patterns, capital flows, trade, and commodity-related issues in emerging markets and developing countries.

Navigating Geopolitical Uncertainties

Dr Ohnsorge is an acknowledged authority on navigating geopolitical uncertainty. Her career has been marked by her ability to analyze and predict how global political shifts affect economic landscapes, especially in countries with complex geopolitical tensions.

South Asia, where Dr Ohnsorge focuses much of her work, is heavily influenced by geopolitical instability, with long-standing issues such as

border disputes, changing alliances, and economic vulnerabilities. Dr Ohnsorge's analysis helps countries in this region assess and plan for the economic risks associated with these uncertainties, from shifts in global trade policies to the impacts of international sanctions or conflicts.

Her expertise also includes advising on how countries can mitigate the impacts of global crises, such as trade wars or global financial instability, which disproportionately affect smaller and developing economies.

Banking for the World

At the World Bank, Dr Ohnsorge has made substantial contributions to global economic analysis. She served as the Manager at the Development Economics Vice Presidency, where she spearheaded the flagship "Global Economic Prospects" report, providing in-depth analyses of global economic trends and forecasts. In her current role as Chief Economist for South Asia, she leads research on key economic issues in the region, aiming to inform policy debates and World Bank lending decisions.

Influence and Impact

Dr Ohnsorge's unique expertise lies in her ability to blend economic theory with real-world policy solutions. Her deep understanding of public policy and adeptness in navigating the complex and unpredictable geopolitical landscape make her an invaluable figure in global economic discourse. Her work continues to help nations respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world, fostering both economic stability and sustainable growth across regions.

With international institutions relying on her judgment, Dr Ohnsorge has played a key role in shaping policy responses to unforeseen global events, ensuring that economic development strategies are resilient in the face of ever-evolving geopolitical challenges.

Visionary Entrepreneur and Champion of Change

A first-gen serial entrepreneur, angel investor, best-selling author, and philanthropist, Somdutta Singh, speaks of an equitable workplace, in conversation with Aditi Chakraborty



Dr Somdutta Singh
Founder & CEO, Assiduous Global, MIT Alumna

What is your business strategy at Assiduous?

At Assiduous Global, our business strategy revolves around the philosophy: 'Lead to Action.' As the world's 3rd largest cross-border e-commerce accelerator, we focus on empowering both Fortune 500 companies and SMEs, particularly FMCG Brands, to scale effortlessly across more than 20 countries and over 12 global marketplaces, DTC stores and Quickcommerce.

Our proprietary technology platform serves as the backbone of our operations, streamlining and optimizing the e-commerce expansion process for brands worldwide. With recognition from prestigious industry benchmarks such as Inc. 5000 in 2021 and Deloitte Fast 50 in 2022 and 2024, Assiduous Global has solidified its reputation, earning the trust of 100+ brands globally.

In the rapidly evolving tech and e-commerce sectors, maintaining a competitive edge is crucial. By leveraging innovation, actionable data-driven insights, and advanced technology solutions, we drive sustainable growth, operational efficiency, and meaningful impact in the global e-commerce landscape.

As a young entrepreneur, what are your successful initiatives?

I am driven by the core belief in

hiring and empowering talented individuals. A great team is fundamental to building successful ventures, a culture of innovation, execution, and continuous growth.

My entrepreneurial philosophy centers around value creation rather than mere valuation. I focus on building profitable and sustainable businesses, delivering tangible value and clients' satisfaction. This approach has been instrumental in transforming Assiduous Global into one of the largest cross-border e-commerce accelerators globally.

Additionally, I lead Karma Holdings, a diversified family office investing strategically in sectors such as real estate, agriculture, media, health & wellness, and direct-to-consumer brands. To contribute to industry knowledge, I have authored two bestselling books, *Decoding Digital: Unlocking Digital Barriers* and *Stories from New India: Policies, Hope, and Change*.

What are your outstanding achievements and contributions as a woman leader?

My greatest achievement is empowering people through meaningful opportunities. Creating co-partners at Assiduous, provides not just employment but pathways for professional growth. I'm proud

of establishing an environment with equal gender representation, which I consider my most significant contribution to changing industry dynamics. This commitment to equality shapes our entire organizational culture.

I served as the youngest elected woman Vice-Chairperson of NASSCOM Product Council and the first Indian-origin woman on Philip Kotler's Kotler Impact board. I facilitated the Government of India to form the visionary Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) by NITI Aayog, helping enterprising women on their entrepreneurial journeys. As a firm believer in giving back to society, I founded Bhavi, a not-for-profit organization that supports agricultural reforms, family rehabilitation, and skill development across Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, primarily in eastern India, where my roots lie.

Being a first-generation entrepreneur, I recognized early on the underrepresentation of women in business. To help bridge this gap, I founded Karma Holdings Family Office using my own funds to support women-led ventures. I invest as a Limited Partner in funds that have at least one woman General Partner, ensuring that more women have access to capital and opportunities in the business world.



Sandhya Devanathan
Vice President and Managing Director, Meta India

Riding the Digital Wave

Harnessing the power of technology and blending tradition with innovation, Sandhya Devanathan is optimistic about the immense potential of the media and entertainment industry to accelerate India's sustained growth and global relevance

Under Sandhya's leadership, Meta India has achieved significant growth in the Indian market. Sandhya Devanathan joined Meta in 2016 as a Group Director, SEA—E-commerce, Travel, and Financial Services, in Singapore. With 22 years of experience in the fields of banking, payments, and technology, she played a significant role in developing the company's operations and teams in Singapore and Vietnam, along with its e-commerce projects in Southeast Asia. In 2020, she transitioned to oversee gaming in the Asia-Pacific

region. She rose to the current role of VP & MD in January 2023.

Prior to joining Meta, she had worked with Citigroup and Standard Chartered. She performed several roles. With Citi, she worked in

"SANDHYA COMPLETED HER BACHELOR OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING AT ANDHRA UNIVERSITY FROM 1994 TO 1998. THEN SHE MOVED TO DELHI TO PURSUE AN MBA AT DELHI UNIVERSITY FROM 1998 TO 2000"

various positions from May 2000 to December 2009, while she worked with Standard Chartered from December 2009 to December 2015.

Sandhya completed her Bachelor of Technology in Chemical Engineering at Andhra University from 1994 to 1998. Then she moved to Delhi to pursue an MBA at Delhi University from 1998 to 2000. In 2014, she attended the University of Oxford for a leadership course.

A leader in the tech sector, she predicted that India is on track to become an \$8 trillion economy by 2030, with digital playing a pivotal role. Highlighting the contribution of the southern states, she said, "Southern states contribute about 35% of the nation's GDP, and the digital economy, which is set to reach \$1 trillion, will see a significant portion of this contribution coming from southern states."

Sandhya emphasises the dominance of the southern states in digital innovation, calling them hubs for startups, AI, IT, and software exports. She pointed out the high internet penetration and mobile-first digital adoption, which are driving the demand for regional content.

With a growing audience in tier two and tier three cities, she stressed the importance of regional content. Focusing on the future of technology in media, Devanathan underscored the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and Meta's AI-driven initiatives that support media and entertainment creators. From scriptwriting to ultra-realistic visual and audio effects, AI is helping transform the industry. Sandhya is optimistic about India's media and entertainment sector.

"AI is at the core of everything we do at Meta, and we believe it will be the most significant technological revolution our generation will witness. We have launched Meta AI, now the world's most used AI system, with 700 million active monthly users," she revealed.

The Legacy Code to Innovation and Growth

Adapting, evolving, and pushing boundaries towards future-readiness, Radhika Agarwal takes pride in her legacy that provides a strong base for comprehensive growth

What were the influences and inspirations that shaped you?

Growing up within the GLA family has been an incredible journey that has shaped me both personally and professionally. GLA was founded just a few years before I was born, and I have witnessed its transformation from a small college to a thriving university—an achievement that once seemed impossible in a place like Mathura and Vrindavan.

My father has been a pillar of strength and resilience, and working under his guidance has been an invaluable learning experience, and his vision instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility. Leadership is not just about making decisions—it is about understanding people, fostering collaboration, and staying committed to a vision larger than oneself.

I've always had a natural aptitude for marketing and leadership, and I've worked relentlessly to hone these skills over the years. Through continuous self-training and a focus on effective communication, I've built a strong cornerstone that allows me to lead with confidence and clarity.

Performing one of the leading roles for the newly established university has been both a challenge and a privilege, allowing me to apply my skills while

contributing to our collective vision. My involvement in high-level decision-making has further strengthened my ability to think strategically and foster meaningful relationships that drive growth.

How do you envision your future with GLA?

Education is an ever-evolving field; innovations and new methodologies need to be implemented to achieve greater heights. As a leader in the making, my vision is to diversify the university—not just in outreach but also in the courses we offer. The world is changing rapidly, and education must keep pace. I aim to introduce industry-ready, interdisciplinary programs that blend technology, innovation, and practical learning, ensuring that students graduate with real-world skills that prepare them for the future.

Balancing tradition with innovation is key to long-term success. What we build today is not just about wealth or material achievements—it is about values,

culture, and the wisdom passed down through generations. While experience provides the foundation, the new generation brings fresh ideas and perspectives. I believe true progress comes from honoring the past while embracing change. It is essential to understand our roots, respect the vision of those who built this institution, and then add our own touch of growth and evolution. With the right balance of tradition and forward-thinking, we can create an education system that empowers the next generation and leaves a lasting mark on the world.

What is your message for aspiring young women?

Success is built on both heritage and innovation. Take pride in where you come from, but don't be afraid to bring your own ideas to the table. When we collaborate and uplift one another, we create something truly extraordinary. Education, leadership, and opportunities are no longer limited by boundaries—this is our time to shape the future.



Radhika Agarwal
Vice President Corporate Relations, GLA university



Poly Patnaik, Founder, Mother's Public School



Minati Sabat, MD, Mother's Group of Schools

Dream Team Elevating Learning

Trailblazers making a difference in the lives of innumerable students with dedication, expertise, and passion, following in the footsteps of their visionary leader, while transforming the education landscape of Odisha

Passion Intertwined with Perseverance: The Inspiring Journey of Poly Patnaik

The belief that passion intertwined with perseverance has the power to shape destinies finds its finest embodiment in Poly Patnaik. A visionary educator and trailblazer, she has redefined learning in India, transforming education into a force for empowerment.

From Humble Beginnings to a Visionary Institution

In 1991, with just ₹30,000 and 14 students, Patnaik, a former college lecturer, took a leap of faith and founded Prakrit. What began as a small classroom has since evolved into Mother's Public School, a prestigious senior secondary

institution educating over 6,000 students across five campuses in Puri, Cuttack, Unit 1, Khandagiri (Bhubaneswar), and Pahala (Bhubaneswar). Today Mother's Public School is more than an institution—it is a symbol of hope, opportunity, and transformation.

Patnaik's contributions to education have garnered widespread recognition. Her many accolades include the Global Principal Award 2021 by Star Global Awards and the Times Power Odisha Award 2021, CBSE Teacher's Award 2009 by former HRD Minister Kapil Sibal and the National Award for Teachers 2012, presented Shri Pranab Mukherjee. In addition, on the 70th birth anniversary of Late Shri Rajiv

Gandhi, she received the Rajiv Gandhi Rashtriya Ekta Samman in New Delhi, and more recently, she was bestowed with the Black Swan Award for 2020-21.

Championing Women's Empowerment

Patnaik's influence extends beyond education. A passionate advocate for women's empowerment, she has dedicated herself to uplifting marginalized women. Believing in the transformative power of employment, she has provided countless women with dignified opportunities to achieve financial independence. Today, the Mother's Group of Schools employs nearly 1,000 individuals, 90% of whom

are women. These empowered women form the backbone of the institution, driving its phenomenal growth and success.

A Legacy of Leadership

Patnaik's success is driven by a team of dedicated leaders who share her vision. At the helm is Minati Sabat, Managing Director of the Mother's Group of Schools. An alumna of Mother's Public School, Minati blends corporate expertise with deep-rooted institutional values. Her leadership in streamlining operations and spearheading restructuring efforts, particularly at the Pahala branch, has been instrumental in the group's growth. As a perfectionist and a natural leader, her ability to handle challenges with calmness and composure has earned her Poly's trust and admiration. As a mother to a 5-year-old, Minati is extremely dedicated to the school's daily operations, ensuring students thrive in a nurturing and creative environment.

Adding to this dynamic team is Supreet Rajpal, CEO of the Mother's Group of Schools and Principal, Mother's Public School, Khandagiri, a distinguished educator with over 25 years of experience. Known for

her meticulous approach, Rajpal has shaped policies to create safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environments. Her leadership extends well beyond the classroom, engaging faculty, students, and community stakeholders to promote continuous growth and open communication. Her tenure as headmistress at various esteemed institutions has further enriched her expertise in curriculum implementation, faculty mentorship, and extracurricular programming.

Asha, Vice Principal of Mother's Public School, Unit 1, plays a vital role in managing the school and leading impactful sessions for parents, teachers, and students. A sought-after speaker, she has represented the institution at national and international conferences, including IIT Chennai. She has also initiated student exchange programs and spearheads skill development initiatives in collaboration with the Odisha Government and global institutes, equipping students with essential skills for the future.

Equally inspiring is Chitra Ajay, Principal of the Pahala branch, whose 32 years in teaching have shaped countless young lives. She

believes in shaping young minds into responsible, conscientious citizens, fostering not just academic excellence but also values, ethics, adaptability, and resilience. Dedicated to creating a nurturing learning environment, she leads by example, inspiring both students and colleagues.

Similarly, Parvin, with over two decades of experience, has played a pivotal role in advancing the school's mission. Renowned for her ingenuity and expertise in curriculum planning and pedagogy, she integrates ICT proficiency with strong administrative acumen to drive progressive education. Recently appointed Principal of the Puri campus, she now leads its transformation into a residential school, embracing this challenge with vision and determination

A Holistic Vision for the Future

Patnaik and her team have built an institution that is deeply rooted in tradition yet progressive in its outlook. Her story is one of grit, determination, and an unwavering faith in education's potential to change lives. Today, her dream has grown into a movement, inspiring educators, parents, and policymakers alike.



Supreet Rajpal
CEO
Mother's Group of Schools



Asha T R
Vice Principal
MPS, Unit 1



S Chitra Ajay
Principal
MPS, Pahala Campus



Sagufta Parvin
Principal
MPS, Puri Campus



Sunita Williams, NASA Astronaut

Carved in space and time

Astronaut Sunita Williams has been stretching the known limits of human knowledge, endurance, resilience and courage in outer space by scripting a history that transcends distinctions of gender, geographies, and, time

Astronaut Sunita Williams, one of the most inspiring figures in space exploration, is an iconic role model for aspiring astronauts, especially women and those from diverse backgrounds.

Of Extensions and Endurance

The unplanned extension of her mission to the International Space Station (ISS) with colleague Barry Wilmore has cemented her identity as an icon. Originally planned as an eight-day mission, unforeseen technical issues led to a stay of over eight months. During this prolonged period, Williams and Wilmore actively contributed to various scientific experiments, station maintenance, and international collaborations. This provided valuable data on long-

duration spaceflight, crucial for future missions.

The Origin Point

An American of Indian descent, Sunita Lyn Williams was born in Ohio to Indian-American parents. Her father, a former U.S. Navy officer, and her mother, who worked in health care, instilled in her the values of hard work, discipline, and determination. A deep interest in science and the workings of the universe, led Williams to choose a career in aerospace engineering.

After a degree in mathematics from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, Williams became a U.S. Navy officer, and then a Navy pilot. Her aviation skills facilitated her selection as a NASA astronaut in 1998, where her dedication and exceptional technical

skills helped set the stage for her groundbreaking work in space.

Carved in Space and Time

While Williams's career with NASA is marked by several notable accomplishments, it is her time in space that has truly solidified her iconic status. Williams' first flight into space was on December 9, 2006, aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery during Mission STS-116, part of the construction of the International Space Station (ISS). This marked Williams's first opportunity to work in orbit. She contributed to critical spacewalks that helped further the ISS's assembly.

Her second spaceflight solidified her place in space history. On July 12, 2007, Williams launched aboard the Space Shuttle Atlantis. Mission STS-117 made Williams one of the longest-serving women in space. During this, she spent more than six months aboard the ISS, where she performed a record-breaking seven spacewalks—more than any other woman before her.

An Ambassador for Science

Sunita Williams' status as an icon is fortified by her role as an ambassador for science and space exploration. She is actively engaged in motivating young people, particularly girls and women, to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Williams is committed to breaking down barriers that have historically prevented women from pursuing careers in space and engineering.

Williams' contributions to NASA, her time aboard the (ISS), and her dedication to pushing the boundaries of human exploration have made her a symbol of perseverance, resilience, and empowerment. With the last eight months in space, it seems that Sunita Williams' legacy will remain carved in space and time for decades to come.



Prof Manoshi Roy Chowdhury
Co-Chairperson, Techno India Group

Of Strength, Grace and Worth

Women and their worth are not up for debate. In boardrooms and in battlefields, in public spaces and in public life, in conscience and in consciousness, it's time to claim our seats. Prof Manoshi Roy Chowdhury writes

I was brought up in the coal fields of Bilaspur, Dhanbad, Asansol & Raniganj, the eldest of three daughters. In a world that placed its hopes on sons, my grandmother often lamented the absence of one in our family.

My father, however, rejected that notion. He taught us badminton, driving, and insisted I receive the best education—even if it meant sending me miles away to an English-medium school. My mother filled our lives with music and dance, showing me that strength and grace could coexist.

Life took its own course. Marriage came first, followed by motherhood. By the time I considered stepping into the workforce, I was already carrying the label of a homemaker. And that label came with assumption—that any position I took would be handed over to me, not earned. Even after co-founding Techno India Group Public Schools, I had no office of my own. It became clear that waiting for a seat at the table was futile—I had to prove I belonged.

And so, I did. Today, TIGPS has grown into a network of 16 schools

across West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. It was a moment of pride when TIGPS was recognised as the best chain of schools in the eastern region by Assocham for three consecutive years.

Few years ago, as the Co-Chairperson of Techno India Group, overseeing businesses across sectors such as healthcare, hospitality, and education, I started managing 6,800+ staff and 1 lakh students, annually. Nothing prepared me for this role except stepping into it and trusting my intentions were right. That has always been my north star.

But the struggle doesn't end there. Gender inequality isn't just structural—it's psychological, shaping how women perceive their own capabilities. This realisation led me to establish Monoshij, the wellness wing of Techno India Group, along with initiatives like Labonnya, Human Library, and Techno Olympica Knights.

Last year, we founded ASMI Business School—where we're not sticking to traditional MBA modules but creating multidisciplinary programmes to make students future-ready.

Through it all, my family, had stood by my side - through every challenge and triumph - helping my dreams into reality. I'm forever grateful for their unwavering love and support."

In most rooms I walk into, I am one of the few—if not the only—women at the table. But that hasn't stopped me from leading with empathy and standing my ground. Among a sea of suits, I lead like a woman—unapologetically, in my saree, with pride.

To every woman who has been told she isn't enough—you are. You don't have to mould yourself to be more 'acceptable' or 'likeable'.

The world may try to make you question your worth. But your dreams are yours, and no one can take them from you. Stand tall. Take up space. Keep going.



Sumita Dawra
Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment

Demographic Dividend and Labour Reforms

To fully harness the larger potential workforce and implementation of labour reforms as drivers of future growth, Sumita Dawra underscores the importance of job creation as a multi-stakeholder initiative

India's demographic dividend and labour reforms are pivotal to driving future growth, with flexible hiring practices, ease of doing business, and adequate skill sets within the workforce, alongside other growth engines of manufacturing, expansion of the service sector, infrastructure, etc. "The budget has a whole-of-government approach geared towards employment," says Labour Secretary Sumita Dawra. She believes that the employment-linked initiative (ELI) schemes—Scheme A for first-timers, Scheme B for job creation in manufacturing, and Scheme C that

entails support to employers for additional employment—along with an upgrade of 1,000 ITIs and internships for 10 million youth in the top 500 companies, will boost job creation. This has been a key ask of the industry, and the Budget 2025-2026 has a number of growth drivers that will generate employment.

The labour ministry is consulting with the labour unions and the employers and also focusing on the states and union territories. About 31-32 states, depending on the Code, have already pre-published their draft rules that are being reviewed to be harmonised with the

framework of the Labour Codes that would be uniform across different states for the industries.

Dawra underscores the importance of expanding social security coverage for the unorganised and informal sectors while recognising the need for governance reforms in the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

She has served the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as Special Secretary (secretary equivalent) in the Logistics division of DPIIT. She is in charge of the implementation of the Prime Minister's flagship program—PM GatiShakti National Master Plan. Earlier, from 1993 to 2008, she served in districts of the State of Andhra Pradesh in development and welfare programs and later at the state level in various positions.

Thereafter she was posted in the Ministry of Finance in Gol and subsequently at the Indian Mission in Beijing, PRC, as Head of the Economic Wing from 2011 to 2014.

Upon completion of her tenure, she served as Principal Secretary, Department of Higher Education, and later as Principal Secretary, Department of Transport, Road & Building, from 2014 to 2017, in the state of Andhra Pradesh. While on deputation at UNICEF, India, from 2017 to 2019, she handled several governance projects for India.

Dawra is a 1991 batch IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, with experience at various levels of governance in India and abroad. She holds Masters and MPhil degrees in Economics, and two Master's degree in Business Management and Public Policy, respectively, and authored two books on public policy at National and international level: 'Poor but Spirited in Karimnagar: Field Notes of a Civil Servant,' and 'China: Behind the Miracle.' Her other publications include 'Eradication of Child Labour: Convergence Strategies.'



Dr Archana Mantri, Vice Chancellor, Anurag University, Telangana

Learning Beyond Boundaries

An educator and visionary leader, Dr Archana Mantri strives to consistently deliver equitable, fair and multicultural learning

Q What major strides can be taken to upgrade the current education system and become more inclusive?

India will continue to have the highest population of young people, between ages 18-24, in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country. Unfortunately, the average GER still remains below 25%. This demand-supply gap calls for a more strategic approach to make the education more accessible for many in this age bracket. The global education development agenda reflected in SDG 4 was adopted by India in 2015, and it asks us to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote

lifelong learning opportunities for all. And for this, more and more higher education institutes (HEIs) need to bring accessibility into their strategic priorities.

We, at Anurag University, put deliberate efforts into enrolling students from diverse backgrounds—rural, urban, semi-urban, regional, other states, and international. The diversity of students plays an important role in bringing variegated experiences to campus life. The gaps in social strata bridge with students collaborating for various tasks on campus.

While demographic diversity and being accessible is one aspect of our aspiration, at Anurag University, making it interculturally plural is another. I can recount many

initiatives executed on a daily basis to make our campus truly equitable, just, and multicultural.

Q What are the various initiatives of Anurag University towards gender sensitisation and women empowerment?

We take many steps to ensure women's empowerment at our university. By establishing mechanisms for women's equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the administrative and functional process, thus enabling women to articulate their concerns and needs. We have almost 50% women on our leadership board, thus making ours a truly women-led organisation. We offer equitable opportunities to women by provisioning for maternity leave and rejoining opportunities after long leave for family or other reasons. We also conduct awareness sessions on good food, nutrition, and well-being—especially for women. Eliminating practices that discriminate against women by running programs to assist women to establish and realise their rights, including those that relate to reproductive health. Eliminating violence against women by adopting strict punitive measures permissible under the court of law and placing safety and security measures in place and eliminating discriminatory practices against women and giving them equal opportunities to join those kinds of work, which traditionally may be reserved for men folk.

Q As a woman leader, what is your message to girls who are aspiring for success?

To become successful in any field of work, it starts with internalising your own self-worth. Love yourself, believe in yourself, and respect yourself because you are special.



Schauna Chauhan
CEO of Parle Agro, Indian entrepreneur

The Indian Baroness of Beverages

Successful leadership balanced with personal engagement makes Schauna Chauhan a role model

Schauna Chauhan is the eldest daughter of Prakash Chauhan, the man behind the stupendous success of Parle. As the CEO of Parle Agro, the largest beverage producer in India, Schauna heads a conglomerate that earned a revenue of Rs. 8,000 crores in the year 2023-2024 and is set to target generating revenue of Rs. 25,000 crores by 2030. Known to be the driving force behind the growth of Parle Agro, her position of CEO is a fine balancing act of having the big picture in focus and being fully immersed in daily operations. She has made Frooti, a widely popular household name across pan India.

As the flag bearer of Parle Agro, an organization that prides itself on its network of local agrarian communities, she is in the coveted circle of women leaders in this sector, which continues to be mostly male-orientated. Chauhan has always initiated the open-door policy at Parle Agro, making the work environment more comfortable and approachable. Her astute advice to women who aspire to be entrepreneurs is that they need to be financially independent from the very start and not let gender-based societal expectations get in the way.

A top-ranking Indian entrepreneur and a mother, Chauhan is a role model

in having it all. As she continuously has her foot firmly on the company's growth accelerator, she is also a hands-on mother who doesn't hold back from taking her son in to work if required, back in the day when he was a child. She emphasizes a harmonious coexistence of personal and professional life to be able to fulfill both roles to full capacity. Chauhan is married to actor Bikram Saluja and has a son, Jahaan, with him.

The Baroness of Beverages as she is known in business circles, Chauhan is a keen proponent of out-of-the-box pathways for generating sustainable growth. As Parle Agro thunders towards a milestone mark set to be achieved in 2030, Chauhan is keen to enter the dairy sector, where multinational giants such as The Coca-Cola Company and Nestle have had limited success. In India, the dairy sector is tightly controlled by regional and national cooperatives and in its midst, Chauhan stepped in, just during the Covid pandemic in 2021.

Under her leadership, Parle Agro launched Smooch, a favored milk product, to disrupt the dairy consumption of Indian consumers. By the end of 2025, the segment is projected to achieve a growth of Rs. 5,000 crores. Chauhan's keenest project yet, Smooch is the child of her intense labor through in-depth research, the setting up of avant-garde manufacturing infrastructure, and a perfect set of flavor compositions. Chauhan does not view innovation as a necessity to survive but more as enhancing organic growth, a different perspective in the business world.

A successful business leader who took on the baton from her father, Prakash Chauhan, to lead one of India's most recognized business houses. As a wife and mother, Schauna Chauhan reinforces the fact that Indian women are impacting the domestic and often the international economies in their terms as women, yielding power and shaping business successes.

Driving Transformative Changes Globally

A visionary leader, passionate about shaping the workforce of the future, Maninder Kapoor Puri is committed to cultivating self-managed, agile teams

As a vital member of Biocon's Executive Leadership Team, Maninder drives HR initiatives that propel the company toward organizational excellence and innovation. Known for her strategic foresight and holistic approach to people management, Maninder has been instrumental in shaping the future of work and corporate culture in sectors like IT and pharma. With over 30 years of experience, Maninder has consistently demonstrated her exceptional ability to align HR strategies with business growth, foster inclusive cultures, and develop high-performing, future-ready teams. She holds an Executive Education degree from Wharton in the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Program.

As she transitioned into leadership roles, Maninder championed initiatives that empower employees, strengthen leadership pipelines, and foster resilient, engaged cultures. Today, Maninder's expertise and thought-leadership spans multiple industries, emerging as a trusted voice on the future of work, digital transformation, and diversity. By sharing her insights at global conferences, participating in industry panels, and advising

companies on their strategic direction, she has influenced corporate policies and driven industry-wide shifts toward inclusive growth and empowerment.

Leading a cultural transformation during a period of significant organizational change, she pioneered novel leadership development strategies, employee engagement, and inclusivity efforts to create an agile, resilient workforce capable of navigating evolving business challenges.

Maninder's tech-forward, people-first approach is at the core of her mission to cultivate a workplace culture built on empowerment, accountability, continuous learning, inclusion, and collaboration. She is committed to driving innovation through the integration of AI and digitalization, ensuring organizations stay competitive in an increasingly tech-driven world. By leveraging global frameworks, she has played a key role in building adaptable, future-ready teams capable of tackling tomorrow's challenges.

She firmly believes in Peter Drucker's saying, 'Culture eats

strategy for breakfast.' She recognizes that a strong, positive culture, shaped by leadership, is essential for sustainable success. Maninder also believes that culture flows from the top, and when leadership sets the right tone, it creates an environment where core values thrive. Through mentorship programs, leadership workshops, and continuous professional development initiatives, she ensures that emerging leaders possess the skills and resilience needed to navigate complex, global business environments. Her commitment to employee well-being extends beyond professional growth; Maninder emphasizes the importance of mental and physical health, promoting a balanced work-life.

Outside of her professional life, Maninder is a woman of many passions. An avid reader, she is always seeking new knowledge to fuel both her leadership journey and personal growth. Whether driving through scenic routes to clear her mind or playing badminton and pickleball, she remains committed to living a full, purpose-driven life.



Maninder Kapoor Puri, Head of HR, Biocon



Prativa Mohapatra
VP & MD, Adobe India Inc

Fostering Innovation and Inclusion

Embracing technology beyond a support function, as the core of businesses and an enabler for empowerment, Prativa Mohapatra creates a holistic environment with equal opportunities

In an extremely competitive tech sector, Prativa Mohapatra makes her mark as the first woman to oversee Adobe's Indian operations. With over 25 years of experience in the tech industry, including leading business transformation, expanding teams to meet accelerated growth, and evangelizing artificial intelligence technology with customers, she has carved her own niche.

Prativa started her career with PwC India after graduating from NIT Rourkela with a bachelor's degree in computer science and

engineering and earning an MBA from Xavier Institute of Management in Bhubaneswar. Before joining Adobe, she served as VP Digital Sales for IBM's APAC region. Aligning with Adobe's values of creating the future distinctly and uniquely, she was quick to take on her leadership role.

The shift from foundational technologies at IBM to Adobe's cutting-edge digital transformation was phenomenal, encompassing cultural and technological shifts. Prativa spearheads the software company's growth and constant

transformation by fostering a dynamic and diverse work environment with millennials, Gen Z, and baby boomers. While fostering a strong, collaborative team culture, Adobe India has grown rapidly under her leadership, reflecting the brand's evolving role. "We are not just part of Gen AI conversations but at the forefront of it," she says.

Championing diversity and inclusion, a consciousness arising from her own journey from a small town in Odisha to a leadership position in a multinational, she is committed to making a cultural and social difference at workplace. In the business, Prativa has benchmarked business outcomes and inclusivity with equal sincerity, encouraging the first-line managers to ensure a diverse team.

At Adobe, programs like SheSparks are dedicated to empowering women and facilitating their return to work after taking breaks. A notable case is that of a woman who returned to the workforce after a two-year hiatus; she not only thrived during her six-month contract but also secured a permanent position. She encourages aspiring female leaders to redefine the narrative from being viewed as a 'woman leader' to simply being a 'leader.'

Prativa Mohapatra's effective leadership in the current technology sector is based on resilience and adaptability, especially when overseeing diverse teams from various age groups. She maintains a strong learning orientation in a rapidly evolving work environment. Prativa's success mantra is to 'embrace fearlessness and follow safe pathways, manage the business, and pursue your objectives. Strive to be both a visionary and a facilitator, highlighting the essential dual nature of leadership roles that are important for everyone, regardless of gender.'

Shaping Minds and Enhancing Learning

A visionary leader, a versatile personality and an educationist, Dr Shalya Raj is unlocking the potential of students and influencing their minds towards achieving a holistic growth

Swami Vivekanand Subharti University (SVSU) is committed to providing high-quality education and developing future leaders who are confident, independent thinkers, innovators entrepreneurs, and exemplary human beings. Dr Shalya Raj is at the helm of the university's work, aiming to deliver world-class education to students and foster an environment that transforms the lives of future generations.

After earning her degree from the SDM College of Dental Sciences in Dharwad, Dr Shalya went on to obtain a Master's in Conservative Dentistry & Endodontics from Subharti Dental College. Over time, she has published a multitude of research articles and academic books. Her dedication to academic excellence and her sense of purpose greatly impressed the board of trustees of SVSU, leading to her appointment as the university's CEO. Under her leadership, the university continues to generate new knowledge through research, offer exceptional patient care and achieve excellence in education and show a commitment to community welfare.

Dr Shalya Raj is an eco-warrior, committed to environmental sustainability. She, passionately

promotes a 'Go Green' initiative. Thanks to her efforts, the Subharti University campus thrives with greenery and has implemented innovative projects like solar-powered vehicles, rainwater harvesting systems, and composting facilities, aligning with the SDG. Another initiative towards environmental protection by Dr Shalya is the 'One person Adopts Two Trees' campaign on campus, engaging students, faculty, and staff in this green effort.

Another remarkable initiative led by Dr Shalya is the donation drive organized in partnership with 'Unmukt Bharat.' Through this organization, she spearheads donation drives for underprivileged communities, gathering essentials like food, medicine, and clothing. Her list of admirable contributions continues with the establishment of a free creche service for working women at the university.

A distinguished educator, and academic, a skilled clinician, a trained Kathak dancer, and a Hindustani classical singer; Dr Shalya Raj wears many hats. Her diverse talents have made her an essential part of various cultural and social events at the university. She encourages students to excel academically while also nurturing their artistic talents.

Dr Shalya maintains her personal commitments while ardently advocating for the university. Recognizing the significance of physical and mental well-being in reaching new life milestones, she participates in outdoor sports such as badminton and swimming. She also cherishes time spent with her children, instilling her values and beliefs in them. Dr Shalya Raj is a complete woman who beautifully balances her professional and personal life, inspiring many young women who wish to pursue success in their walks of life.



Dr Shalya Raj, CEO, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University



Anita Lal
Founder & Creative Director, Good Earth

Designing a legacy

Anita Lal, the face and force behind one of India's uniquely iconic brands, is a pioneering driver of the luxury lifestyle and design industry in India. An epitome of purpose-driven entrepreneurship, Lal stands as an icon in the industry

Think of an Indian brand that can be described as craft-conscious, colour-creative and, somewhat ungrammatically but aptly, as candescent-calm. Good Earth India is probably the first name you will think of. And Anita Lal, the face and force behind this uniquely iconic brand, is a pioneering driver of the luxury lifestyle and design industry in India.

A History of Heritage

Founded in 1996, Good Earth has been driven by Lal's deep appreciation for India's rich cultural heritage. She identified a market gap – the urban Indian consumer looking for high-quality home products that were contemporary yet rooted in India's design language. As a studio potter acutely conscious of the dying traditions of India's village potters, this represented an opportunity both entrepreneurial and conservationist. Over time, this extended to other

aspects of India's artistic heritage, and today, Lal can be largely credited for having brought India's village crafts into contemporary relevance by bridging traditional crafts with modern aesthetics.

Lal's dedication to craftsmanship has also played a significant role in transforming the Indian luxury lifestyle industry. By collaborating with skilled artisans across the country, Anita has helped revive traditional Indian crafts, allowing them to thrive in the modern world. This has not only provided a platform for local artisans to showcase their skills but has also encouraged a sense of pride and value in India's rich cultural heritage.

Intent, Intuition and Influence

Lal has often said how all her decisions have been driven by intuition and backed by that first intent. Starting off at a time when organised retail in India was nascent, Lal steered the company through

various challenges with a passionate perseverance to build the brand. Today Good Earth is known as a pioneering luxury brand celebrating Indian craftsmanship, with 11 boutiques across the country.

Delight in Design

Lal's influence in the luxury lifestyle space can be attributed to her focus on integrating aesthetics with purpose. Good Earth's unique philosophy lies in merging traditional craftsmanship with modern design, creating pieces that are timeless yet innovative. Lal has often spoken about the philosophy of van vaibhav or 'splendour of the forest' – something that speaks of the interconnectedness of our world – and has been at the heart of their design philosophy. It is this that inspires Good Earth's designs, its choice of natural and sustainable materials, made ethically.

Success in Sustainability

Lal and Good Earth were already ahead of the curve in terms of catering to the growing global demand for eco-conscious luxury. Their commitment to sustainable design resonates with an ever-growing customer base. But Lal's true influence has been in elevating the concept of sustainability within the luxury market, a sector traditionally associated with not just opulence but excess.

Love, Light and Legacy

Lal's commitment to authenticity and resilience has helped her script a story of purpose-driven entrepreneurship, and illustrates with grace how love for craft and culture can create a brand that resonates across geographies and generations.

More than the rewards and recognitions that have come her way, perhaps Lal's enduring legacy is in her personal philosophy and advocacy of beautiful yet sustainable living that has slowness, mindfulness and joy at its heart.



Sandeepa Kanitkar, CMD and Founder, Kan Biosys

Sowing Seeds of Tomorrow

In an endeavor to contribute to the development of the rural economy, Sandeepa Kanitkar is pioneering use of sustainable microbial technologies to increase farmers' productivity to produce safe food by nurturing soils with carbon and microbes

Q As a woman entrepreneur, how did you pioneer in the field of crop management?

Worldwide farmers are fighting a losing battle due to reducing soil fertility, scarcity of water, climate change effects and pesticide residues. It is a vicious cycle of adding more but yielding less. Also, the food is not safe. The water is contaminated with nitrates and it is getting hotter by the day with erratic monsoons.

As an Industrial microbiologist I started working with Prof U K Kanitkar, a crop physiologist, who convinced and motivated me to work on microbiome – the key to solve fundamental issues in agriculture and improve the plight of farmers. The entrepreneur bug hit me in 1991 and I decided to stay back in India and work

for the farmers. My eventful journey has been a great learning!

We were awarded WIPO-United Nations Gold Medal by the Vice-President of India in 2000 for our first Indian patent for liquid biofertilizers, followed by 3 National Technology Day awards [1999, 2000, 2022] for developing microbial technologies. In 2005 Kan Biosys started with a team of 9 members and today the strength is 250. We have launched around 28 products for soil health management, biofertilizers and bio-pesticides for producing safe food without worrying about residues in food. Kan Biosys has largest fermentation plant to produce more than 2 million litres/kgs of microbial products for sustainable agriculture. We serve farmers through 2500 channel partners in 7 states and

export to 5 countries. We house one of the largest microbial bank of agriculturally useful microbes.

Q How are digitisation and microbial technologies helping in agriculture?

Any technology in the agriculture sector takes time to mature and reach farmers at scale. AI/ML have the potential to change the speed of extension and make high-end technology cheaper, affordable and simplified. Be it in satellite monitoring and providing just -in-time advisory to use right input at the right time, avoiding losses to getting better rates. The next big revolution in agriculture is how fast technologies reach farmers. We believe that more than 30% of all inputs used by the farmer in his toolbox would be microbial technologies with a potential to reach almost 70%. Globally, Agri-biotech sector can unleash a new generation of start-ups.

Q What is your vision on the Agri-biotech sector?

India's Agri-biotech sector will double in the next 4 to 5 years crossing Rs 6000 crores. Farmers have triggered a fruit revolution by exporting high value crops like grapes, pomegranates, basmati rice, spices, tea, coffee etc. 'Make in India' initiative can make India a powerhouse for producing microbial and sustainable high value products, maximizing food safety and profits. They have a tool to mitigate climate change – be it water scarcity, drought, flooding, saline soils etc. Carbon sequestration models will improve farmer profits in the future. Prime Minister is ambitious to increase Agri-exports to 100 billion from 33 billion USD. Government has already launched new initiatives in the Budget-2025. Right government policy support for scaling biofertilizers, bio stimulants and biopesticides can make our farmers and consumers happy.



Shefali Goradia
Chairperson, Deloitte South Asia

Leading the Big Four

The first woman to lead a 'Big Four' firm in India, Shefali Goradia envisions a robust pipeline of talented women leaders for a brighter future in corporate governance

Shefali Goradia leads the governing body in executing its stewardship and fiduciary duties while collaborating closely with Deloitte's Executive Committee on strategic initiatives and other obligations. She also directs the Global Boardroom Program for the South Asia region. Through the Boardroom Program, the company aims to cultivate and actively engage a robust community of independent directors and board members within India Inc., providing them with essential insights on effective governance and proactive leadership.

"Achieving boardroom diversity

requires a significant shift in perspective. As many organisations tend to select board members with CEO or CFO backgrounds, these statistics do not present a

"SHEFALI IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING EMERGING ISSUES, INCLUDING CLIMATE OBJECTIVES, ESG, INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE TRUST, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENSURING THESE TOPICS REMAIN ON THE BOARDROOM AGENDA"

promising outlook for developing future leaders. India Inc. must move beyond traditional patterns and focus on capabilities rather than previous positions," stated Shefali Goradia, Chairperson of Deloitte South Asia.

Shefali is deeply committed to addressing emerging issues, including climate objectives, ESG, innovation, enterprise trust, diversity, inclusion, and sustainable development, ensuring these topics remain on the boardroom agenda.

Before assuming her role as the Deloitte South Asia Chair, she held several senior leadership and executive roles within the firm. With 35 years of experience as a chartered accountant and tax expert, she has extensive knowledge in advising multinational corporations on establishing and structuring operations in India. She has also taken on advisory positions concerning cross-border mergers and acquisitions, corporate reorganisations, and corporate governance.

Throughout her career, her contributions have been recognised in prestigious global directories such as Euromoney's Guide to the 'World's Leading Tax Advisers' and 'The International Who's Who Legal' in categories like global elite thought leaders, corporate tax, and private funds. Shefali is also a member of the Permanent Scientific Committee of the International Fiscal Association.

With lifelong learning as her fundamental principle and as an advocate for equal access to opportunities, Shefali consistently motivates her female colleagues and mentees to pursue leadership roles. She emphasises two key objectives: building leadership and knowledge among women leaders and fostering a network where they can share experiences, highlight their unique value, and collaborate as like-minded leaders.

Hyderabad's Vasavi Group Redefines Luxurious Living

Sowmya Chanda on pioneering holistic yet affordable projects in real estate segment and fostering women's empowerment

Q As a woman leader, what technological innovations and industry milestones have the Vasavi group achieved in the real estate landscape?

As a leader, I believe that real success is measured by the lives we touch and the opportunities we create. Vasavi Group is not just about building projects; it's about shaping futures, fostering equality, and leaving a lasting impact. At Vasavi Group, innovation is not just about technology, it's also about redefining how people experience real estate.

We have introduced sustainable architecture, smart living solutions, and community-focused designs that enhance the quality of life for our building residents. Our flagship building projects in Hyderabad such as Vasavi Ananda Nilayam, Vasavi Crown East, and Vasavi Nandanam exemplify our vision of combining affordability with luxury.

Our implementation of customer-centric strategies such as digital solutions and AI-driven services that streamline the process from property selection to post-purchase services, has also set new industry benchmarks. The goal is to not just build homes but to create holistic living experiences that stand the test of time.

Q What are the various initiatives for fostering women's empowerment at Vasavi Group?
Empowering women is at the heart



Sowmya Chanda, Director of Vasavi Group

of our corporate philosophy. We believe real progress comes from fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment for our women employees. We focus on equal growth opportunities for women across all levels, from executive roles to site management. Leadership training programs and mentorship initiatives provide women with the skills and confidence to take on decision-making roles.

Creating a safe and inclusive workspace is a top priority. We have stringent policies to ensure a harassment-free environment where every woman feels valued and respected at work. Additionally, through our ventures like Kalasha Fine Jewels and Value Gold, we empower women by providing them with financial literacy and investment knowledge, helping them secure their financial futures, without dependency on others.

Q What are your philanthropic projects for social transformation and women's skill development?
Through the Vasavi Foundation, we

have launched several initiatives focused on education, food security, and skill development, as our social responsibility lies much beyond our real estate projects.

One of our key focus areas is quality education for underprivileged children where we provide scholarships, school infrastructure, and mentorship programs to bridge the education gap. Additionally, we support daily meal programs and food distribution drives to ensure no child goes hungry.

Women's skill development is another crucial area. We conduct training programs in business, finance, and leadership to help women become financially independent and even launch their ventures. Our goal is to create a self-sustaining ecosystem where empowerment leads to long-term social transformation.

We have had an illustrious journey spanning over 30 years since our inception and have achieved groundbreaking progress, both in business and social impact. The journey has been transformational, and the best is yet to come.



Shahana Goswami, Indian actress

Breaking the Indian actress mould

Shahana Goswami's film career veers away from the tested with a rich and diverse portfolio

Shahana Goswami believes that women will increasingly gain precedence in the film industry over the coming few years, not just as actors but also as scriptwriters, directors, producers and everything that is the name of the game in Bollywood and international movie circuits.

With a variety of roles through her 35 films since she started acting in 2006, she has gained fame in film festivals worldwide as over half of her movies have won acclaim when showcased overseas, even if they were not released in India. Goswami has never had a problem with small roles, as long as they are meaningful to her and catch audience attention, which is exactly what she has done throughout her acting career.

Garnering attention currently with the new release *Despatch* released in December 2024 on

Zee5, she feels that this opportunity of playing the role of the wife of veteran actor Manoj Bajpayee and working with director Kanu Behl was extremely rewarding and an appetizer of what is yet to come from her. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala, *Despatch* has already been showcased as a special presentation at the International Film Festival of India and the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival and is getting ready to be dispatched to many more film festivals across the globe.

Goswami started her acting career in films in 2006 with *Yun Hota Toh Kya Hota*, directed by Naseerudin Shah. Featuring in a supporting role in the blockbuster Indian film *Rock On*, her performance in the film earned her several accolades such as the Filmfare Critics Award for Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress from Lions Gold Awards, Star Screen Awards, and Cineblitz Awards in

2008. An iconic performance, Goswami was also nominated for Filmfare's Best Supporting Actress and Stardust Award for Breakthrough Performance by a Female Artiste for the role.

Since then she has carved herself a reputation in the independent film industry with significant roles in *Heroine*, Deepa Mehta's *Midnight's Children*, her first international film *Zwigato* - which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival - and *Santosh* which debuted at Cannes in 2024..

Within the television format, Goswami has featured in the well-received series *A Suitable Boy* as well as *Bombay Begums*, *The Last Hour*, *Hush Hush*, and *Four Years Later*. Goswami has also acted in two Bangladeshi films, *Under Construction*, for which she received the Best Actress Award at the Cine de Islantilla in Spain, and *Made in Bangladesh*.

Other noteworthy performances include Dido's music video *Let's Do The Things We Normally Do*, and the female lead in *Vara: A Blessing*, directed by Khyentse Norbu.

Goswami's background is very academic with her father being the noted economist and journalist Omkar Goswami, the founder and chairperson of Corporate and Research Group Advisory Private Limited. Her mother Anomita Goswami is an editorial consultant and her brother is a physicist. She trained in professional Odhishi dancing and moved to Mumbai to complete her graduation and continue her acting in theatre with Jamini Paithak's group *Working Title*.

Currently, Goswami lives across Delhi, Mumbai, and Paris, a city she calls her retreat exposure to a diverse global culture and the opportunity to get international assignments. She is focused on continuing to win accolades by supporting the independent film industry in India and abroad.

Dream, Achieve and Inspire

Dr Sohini Sastri promoting a future for gender equality, education for the underprivileged, and financial empowerment for women

Dr Sohini Sastri is a name that resonates with wisdom, spirituality, and humanitarianism. As a renowned astrologer, two-time President Award winner, and life coach, she has carved an inspiring path in the field of occult sciences. Coming from a famous spiritual family background, she has received the Grand Ph D in Astrology from the National American University stands as a testament to her exceptional contributions to the field making her one of the most sought-after astrologers in India and beyond.

Dr Sastri firmly believes that empowering women is key to societal progress. In her latest noble initiative, Dr Sastri established the 'Sohini Sastri Foundation', dedicated to providing education, healthcare, and necessities to underprivileged children. Through this foundation, she has created a significant impact. Her future mission is to make society more prosperous with her contribution. Through her foundation, she has initiated various programs focusing on education for girls, vocational training, skill development, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Her efforts have helped thousands of women gain financial independence and self-reliance. Her organization provides free education and scholarships to



Dr Sohini Sastri, 2 times President Award-winning Astrologer, Life Coach, and Philanthropist

young girls from economically weaker backgrounds, ensuring they have access to quality learning. Additionally, she has been instrumental in skill-based training programs, allowing women to explore career paths in various industries.

As a successful entrepreneur herself, Dr Sastri encourages women to break barriers in business. She has launched initiatives that offer mentorship, funding assistance, and networking opportunities to aspiring women entrepreneurs. Her foundation also promotes small-scale industries, enabling women to start their own ventures.

Beyond women's empowerment, Dr Sastri actively works in healthcare and community development. She has organized numerous health camps, awareness programs on hygiene, and counselling sessions for women

suffering from mental health issues. Her efforts in providing legal aid and support to victims of domestic violence have also been widely recognized.

On the verge of International Women's Day, Dr Sastri envisions a future where gender equality prevails, education is accessible to all, and women have equal opportunities in every sector. She says, "Be proud of being a woman, celebrate your womanhood". She aims to expand her foundation's reach, ensuring more women benefit from skill-building, legal support, and self-employment opportunities.

Her mission remains to create a society where every woman can dream, achieve, and inspire. Through her unwavering dedication, Dr. Sohini Sastri continues to be a beacon of hope, leading the way for a stronger, more inclusive future.



Anupriya Acharya
CEO, Publicis Groupe, South Asia

Agility in Advertising Approach

Technology is essential, and Anupriya Acharya is leveraging its full potential towards programmatic advertising, influencer marketing, and advanced TV advertising

This is a time of remarkable growth and transformation for India, driven by economic progress and advancements in technology. Within this pursuit of expansion, the advertising and creative industry bears a significant responsibility. Advertising must elevate itself above the clutter, providing messaging that is not only relevant and forward-thinking but also emotionally impactful. Anupriya leads the advertising industry with outstanding demographic understanding, engaging campaigns, and innovative brand interactions across a variety of fields, connecting

with a wide range of audiences. Brands possess considerable power to shape perceptions by forging deeper connections with consumers, aligning with their values, and making a positive impact on society. Contemporary creativity transcends mere product sales; it involves crafting stories that echo societal principles and ambitions.

Anupriya manages all the agencies of Publicis Groupe in the South Asia region, encompassing creative, media, PR, digital, and technology, including notable firms like Leo Burnett, L&K Saatchi and Saatchi, BBH, Starcom, Zenith, MSL,

Performics, and Digitas. She is a seasoned media and advertising expert with over 25 years of extensive experience in advertising and marketing, addressing an essential demand for purposeful creativity. Anupriya joined Publicis Groupe in 2013 as the Group CEO of Zenith Optimedia and subsequently took charge of Publicis Media India in 2016. Before joining Publicis, she held senior roles at WPP in India and Aegis Media Singapore. Anupriya has a postgraduate degree in Chemistry from IIT – Roorkee.

Anupriya actively participates in the industry, serving as the President of the Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI) – the principal trade organization for advertising agencies. She was re-elected to the presidency of AAAI in September 2021. Additionally, she is a board member of BARC and DB Corp. Under her leadership, Publicis experienced one of its strongest growth periods, managing over 700 clients across various sectors.

Her responsibilities have included preparing the clients to regain growth momentum, particularly following the pandemic. The firm also secured high-profile clients such as Porsche and Amazon among others. About two years prior to the pandemic, Anupriya and her team at Publicis Groupe, South Asia identified an opportunity to develop e-commerce capabilities. "Our approach has always been to invest in advance," she stated. This foresight proved beneficial during the pandemic, as online orders surged for nearly all products. In an era where technology is essential, it is wise to leverage its full potential. "Agility is crucial, and we devote significant effort to areas such as AI and GenAI," Anupriya notes. Moving forward, the organization will maintain its focus on technology and seek to better meet customer demands.

Transformation to Empowerment

Deepika Chalasani, Clinical Nutritionist, Mind-Body Transformation Coach, and TEDx Speaker, was honored by Times and FICCI Flo and featured in Forbes, Outlook, and Fortune India for her transformative wellness work.

Deepika Chalasani, a 52-year-old Clinical Nutritionist and Mind-Body Transformation Coach, is living proof that sustainable health transformations are possible. Once struggling with obesity-related metabolic disorders, she took charge of her health and reversed conditions like diabetes (HbA1c: 5), hypertension, knee pain, mood swings, palpitations, and fatigue—all through nutrition. She lost over 25 kgs and has maintained it for over a decade.

Her transformation wasn't just personal—it became her life's mission. By combining nutritional science with mind-body coaching, Deepika has helped 15,000+ clients and families in 25+ countries regain energy, overcome health challenges, and transform their lives—without relying on medication.

All-women team to support empowerment

Inspired by her journey, Deepika built an all-women team of nutritionists dedicated to empowering others. This team transforms lives through holistic nutrition & lifestyle programs while enabling women to work independently and balance personal and professional responsibilities.

Comprehensive Health Programs for Every Life Stage

A woman's health journey is shaped by hormonal shifts, life transitions, and daily demands. From adolescence to menopause, each stage brings unique challenges that can leave women feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and frustrated. Deepika's approach isn't about quick fixes—it's about sustainable change through nutrition and lifestyle.

For many, struggles begin with irregular cycles, bloating, mood swings, anxiety, or unexplained weight gain. Thyroid imbalances, inflammation, and chronic fatigue can appear at any stage, impacting focus and productivity. Deepika's team helps women restore energy and balance through personalized nutrition—without medication.

Motherhood brings new challenges—fertility struggles, pregnancy fatigue, gestational diabetes, and postpartum recovery can be draining. Deepika supports women in preparing for pregnancy, healing postpartum without compromising lactation, and

maintaining strength while juggling responsibilities.

Many women battle emotional eating, binge eating, and a complicated relationship with food. Deepika's programs focus on nourishment without restriction, empowering women to take charge of their bodies and well-being.

"The philosophy is simple—nutrition, not medicine, should be the foundation of health. Every meal, every nutrient, and every mindful choice contributes to a woman's ability to feel strong, energetic, and in charge of her body", says Deepika Chalasani. Through these holistic programs, women are reclaiming their confidence, ambitions, and ability to fully participate in life.

With a mission to make wellness accessible, Deepika is launching Triva by Fit Life fitness—a holistic wellness app that merges science and technology to help people track and improve their health effortlessly. Triva offers personalized solutions that fit every lifestyle.



Deepika Chalasani, Clinical Nutritionist, and Mind-Body Transformation Coach



Pooja Ray
Managing Director at Mayfair Hotels and Resorts

A Vision of Hospitality

Fostering an inclusive environment, Pooja Ray has created an equitable workplace in the hospitality industry

Pooja Ray's professional journey began with a deep understanding of hospitality, underscored by her family's history of being hoteliers. A strong educational foundation with a degree in Business Administration and a wealth of experience across various domains of the industry, all contributed to her unique future-focussed leadership style with sustainability, inclusivity and equity as keywords.

The Keywords

If we are to talk brass tacks, under Ray's leadership Mayfair Hotels and Resorts has expanded its presence, and concretised its identity as a luxury and customer-centric organisation, with a one-of-a-kind reputation known for its bold offerings of quirk in luxurious settings.

Ray's vision was to make Mayfair synonymous with luxury, comfort, and outstanding service. Her approach was both strategic and forward-thinking, with a keen focus on the latest keywords in the

hospitality sector, including sustainability, personalized services, and leveraging technology.

By staying ahead of industry trends, Ray has ensured that Mayfair leads in luxury hospitality, while maintaining the personal touch essential for customer loyalty. Ray's ability to make difficult decisions and execute them with grace has ensured that the company remains resilient in a highly competitive market.

Ray is also known for her belief in training as an essential tool to enhance service delivery and maintain consistent quality – both integral to a brand's reputation.

Sustainability First

Ray is a strong advocate for sustainable tourism and eco-friendly practices within the hospitality industry. She acknowledges the impact that the industry can have on the environment and is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of Mayfair Hotels. Initiatives she has

taken such as energy-efficient systems, waste reduction, and promoting organic food sourcing ensures that Mayfair properties are as minimally damaging and as restorative of the environment as possible. Her leadership has been instrumental in positioning Mayfair as a forward-thinking, socially responsible brand in the hospitality sector.

A Seat at the Table

Ray believes that excellence can only be achieved through gender equality. She has ensured that practices extend beyond recruitment. Comprehensive workplace safety measures, exclusive residential accommodations, and flexible work arrangements ensure an environment where women thrive professionally without compromising their personal well-being. Thereby, promoting an environment where more women can thrive in executive roles.

Under her leadership, Mayfair has been continuously setting industry benchmarks for equity and inclusion, with women holding key operational and strategic positions that drive not just the success of the organisation, but the future of hospitality.

In person

Beyond business, Ray is a committed lover of the arts, especially Indian classical dance and music. She strongly believes that an interest in preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage adds immense value to the hospitality experience. Her personal touch is evident in the incorporation of local art forms into the ambiance of Mayfair properties.

Looking Ahead

Ray's unrelenting desire to innovate and lead enables her to push the boundaries of what is possible in luxury hospitality. Whether it is enhancing the guest experience, ensuring sustainable growth, or fostering a culture of inclusivity, she remains committed to driving the success of Mayfair Hotels and Resorts.



Prerna Rajpal
Founder & CEO, AMARIS

Redefining the Fine Jewellery Landscape

Prerna Rajpal shares her entrepreneurial journey towards becoming a global jewelry powerhouse rooted in Indian craftsmanship, in conversation with Aditi Chakraborty

What was your inspiration for entering the fine jewelry business?

I noticed a gap in the market where mom-and-pop stores lacking in transparency and customer service, sold mediocre designs, while a few designers offered high-end options at dramatically inflated prices. I decided that this was the opportunity I wanted to pursue, aiming to create exceptional designs complemented by transparent policies and excellent customer experience. Consequently, I founded AMARIS in 2012.

Coming from a background in finance, entering a new field was initially challenging. I had

trepidations about working at the grassroots with artisans in an unorganized space. However, I quickly realized that I had a talent for design and was eager to bring professionalism to the industry.

There aren't many women in traditional jewelry business. I find that certain aesthetic sensibilities come easily and innately to us as women. We resonate with and understand how women perceive their jewellery, the types suited for specific occasions, their outfits and the entire look, which helped me establish a strong connection with my clients, and the rest is history.

How are you incorporating technology to enhance your business?

AMARIS stands out as one of the few luxury jewelry brands that has a robust online presence. Its customer-centric website employs algorithms to monitor demographic data and display dynamic content to present the ideal jewels for a diverse global audience. The US represents our largest online market, and our operations are driven by persona-targeted strategies, specialized marketing, sales, and payment methods within an advanced marketplace.

In production, each piece is crafted using Computer-Aided Design (CAD) tools for improved visualizations and schematics of 3D stones, which are then transformed into wax prototypes, completing 40% of the process before reaching the artisan. CAD allows us to achieve the perfect finish, precise weight, exact diamond count, and the amount of gold needed even before determining if it qualifies for production in terms of pricing.

We use AI-generated models on product pages to provide context and highlight the dimensions of the jewelry, aiding in better online purchasing choices. The next phase involves incorporating virtual try-on features.

What sets AMARIS apart from other competitive brands?

AMARIS stands out through its focus on creative vision and strong analytical ability. Our designs blend global appeal with Indian sensibilities, offering a diverse range of heritage, red carpet, and daily wear jewelry. As pioneers of e-commerce in luxury jewelry, we cater to the Indian diaspora globally. We integrate online and offline experiences by developing an ecosystem that reimagines client engagement. Additionally, our fully integrated supply chain, from direct sourcing to in-house manufacturing, ensures a mind to market speed of under 15 days. This allows us to curate highly specialized pieces and deliver a unique experience, setting us apart from the competition.