

# Outlook

Read • Think • Understand



Dr Mariazeena Johnson

Rekha Gupta

Ar Shivani Agrawal

Ananya Mukherjee

Lakshmi Hebbalkar

Manoshi Roy Chowdhury

Neha Vijaywargia



Silky Jain Marwah

Roshni Nadar

Girija Subramanian

Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi

Lalitha Nataraj

Preeti Chaudhary

Pia Singh



Geetha Priya Nagpal

Malavika Hegde

## Women

### Torchbearers of Viksit Bharat



Bholi Ahluwalia

Dr Chitra Rajan



Harmanpreet Kaur

Kakali Dutta



Chandni Agarwal

Portia Rohila



Monika Shergil

Dr Neema Agarwal

Tanu Kashyap

Dr Sohini Sastri

Praveena Rai

Niru Agarwal

Sindhu Gangadharan



Vinita Gupta

Annapurna Devi

Shveta Arya

Nandita Sinha

Kavitha Sahai

Radhika Agrawal

Ritu Karidhal Srivastava

## Margins to Mandate: Women Rewriting the Global Order

Women are reshaping global power structures, moving from symbolic representation to decisive leadership across institutions and governance systems worldwide.



Malika Pandey

There was a time when power did not look like a woman. Institutions were designed without her, decisions were framed around her, and authority was exercised over her. Leadership carried an assumed gender. That assumption is now under visible strain.

Across the world, the architecture of power is shifting. Three decades ago, women held just over one in ten parliamentary seats globally. Today, they occupy more than a quarter. The number of women serving as Heads of State or Government has steadily grown. Women now command armed forces, lead central banks, negotiate trade agreements, and help shape regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence and climate transitions. This is not rhetorical progress. It is

institutional change.

The shift is not about symbolic inclusion but structural correction. When women enter leadership in critical mass, governance itself begins to change. Policy priorities expand. Social infrastructure becomes central rather than secondary. Economic participation moves from welfare language to growth strategy. Representation starts translating into rule-making authority.

India's trajectory since 2014 must be viewed within this wider global realignment. For decades, Indian women were largely positioned as beneficiaries of state intervention—recipients within welfare systems and subjects of protection through legislation. Less visible was their authority within economic and political structures. In recent years, that framing has evolved. Women are increasingly recognised not merely as participants in development, but as drivers of growth and governance.

At the grassroots, women hold over 46 percent of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions, marking one of the world's largest

experiments in women-led political decentralisation. This is more than presence; it represents millions exercising fiscal oversight, shaping infrastructure priorities, and negotiating development outcomes.

Nationally, women's representation in Parliament reached its highest level in 2019, reinforcing institutional legitimacy. Economic agency has strengthened this shift. Over 10 crore women have been mobilised into Self Help Groups, managing savings and credit at scale—positioning them as formal economic actors rather than passive recipients.

India has long invoked the idea of shakti. Today, that idea is taking institutional form. The margins are narrowing, the mandate consolidating. Power is no longer presumed—it is being renegotiated, with women at the center of that transformation.

*Author: Malika Pandey is a public policy expert with years of experience working across key ministries of the Government of India, including in Ministry of Women & Child Development.*

## Lead Change With Integrity

Professor Ananya Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University, speaks on leadership, equity and building India's future



Ananya Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University

**Q As Vice-Chancellor, what priorities are shaping your vision for Shiv Nadar University in the coming years?**

At Shiv Nadar University, my vision is to create leaders who can lead the unprecedented change we are going through. For this, we need minds who can boldly pursue new knowledge and innovation – and do so ethically and responsibly.

**Q How can universities better prepare young women to step into leadership roles across sectors?**

Universities need to be proactive about helping young women develop leadership skills. This means providing strong mentorship, encouraging risk-taking and building resilience. However, we also must prepare society to accept women's leadership – the onus cannot be on women alone.

**Q As we celebrate progress, what gives you hope about the future of gender equity in education?**

I feel hopeful when I see how determined young women are to shape their own destinies. Also, every day I meet so many proud fathers, sons, husbands, brothers, colleagues, and friends who tell me about the successful women they admire. It seems there is an

increasing awareness of the struggles underneath those successes. Women are also less afraid to share their struggles and seek support.

**Q On International Women's Day, what message would you like to give to young women who aspire to careers in academia?**

Stay resilient. Your journey is not only about what you achieve personally—it is about opening doors for the women – and men – who will come after you. We are now thinking of a Viksit Bharat –2047. In 20 years from now, you will be world-renowned professionals, innovators, scholars, and leaders in that new world. Please consider what your contribution to Vikas would be today. Which heights do you want to steer our nation to? How will you bring together algorithms and ethics? How will neural networks and human networks collaborate? Think of that today, think of yourselves as active leaders of the change that is unfolding around us.

**Q You have held leadership roles across global institutions. How have those experiences influenced the way you approach higher education in India?**

My time outside India has influenced me in two ways. One, being far from India, I have been able to get an 'outside-in' perspective on the Indian education system, and I can imagine how the best of both systems can be combined. It has also given me a very good understanding of how to engage with universities from different parts of the world that are now coming to India in such significant numbers. I see many opportunities to build transformative higher education systems in India.

**Q Are you seeing a shift in the aspirations and confidence levels of young women entering higher education today? What changes are needed to make campuses more equitable?**

I have definitely noticed a shift— young women entering higher education today are much more ambitious and confident. They are very clear about their desire to lead and make a difference. I wouldn't say higher education alone is 'failing' women, but the societal ecosystem still has far to go in enabling women to realise their full potential. We need to ensure everyone feels safe and that women are represented where key decisions are made.



**Annapurna Devi**, Union Minister for Women & Child Development, Government of India

## Championing Change for Women and Children

At the heart of India's social transformation stands Annapurna Devi, a leader committed to advancing the rights, dignity, and opportunities of women and children across the nation.

**A**s the Union Minister for Women and Child Development in the Government of India and a senior parliamentarian from Kodarma, Jharkhand, Annapurna Devi has consistently placed inclusive growth and human development at the center of governance.

A seasoned BJP leader, she represents Kodarma in the Lok Sabha and was elected to the 18th Lok Sabha in June 2024. Over the years, her public life has been defined by steady leadership, administrative experience, and a focus on delivering results that directly impact communities. Prior to her current role, she served as Union Minister of State for Education, contributing to reforms aimed at strengthening India's education ecosystem. Her involvement in consultative committees linked to the Ministries of Power and

New and Renewable Energy further reflects her engagement in shaping policy beyond social development alone.

As Minister for Women and Child Development, Annapurna Devi has prioritized a comprehensive approach to child welfare — combining access to quality education, improved nutrition, and better healthcare. She has reinforced initiatives targeting malnutrition, child labour, and school access, particularly for children from marginalized and economically vulnerable backgrounds. Her vision underscores that a nation's future is determined by how effectively it invests in its youngest citizens.

Equally central to her mission is the economic and social empowerment of women. She has strongly backed programs that promote skill development, entrepreneurship, financial

literacy, and employment opportunities. By strengthening self-help groups (SHGs) and expanding livelihood initiatives, she aims to ensure women achieve financial independence and greater participation in decision-making processes — both within families and society at large.

Her leadership emphasizes implementation as much as intent. By fostering collaboration among government departments, civil society organizations, and international partners, she has worked to create a coordinated ecosystem that enhances delivery and accountability. Transparency, inclusivity, and measurable outcomes remain guiding principles in her governance style.

Annapurna Devi has also been vocal about safeguarding women and children from violence, exploitation, and discrimination. Through legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and community outreach programs, she seeks to promote a culture of respect, security, and equal opportunity. Her efforts go beyond policy frameworks, aiming to transform mindsets and social attitudes toward gender equality and child rights.

Grounded in both compassion and strategic planning, her work reflects a deep understanding of the interconnected challenges facing India's women and children — from nutrition and health to education, safety, and economic opportunity. By strengthening existing schemes and addressing critical gaps, she continues to shape a more equitable and secure future.

In an era that demands responsive and people-centered governance, Annapurna Devi's leadership stands as a testament to purposeful public service and sustained commitment to social progress.

## Inherited Silver Transformed it to Gold

Ar. Shivani Agrawal turns legacy into thriving enterprise, crafting ecosystems that blend innovation with human-centric excellence



**Ar. Shivani Agrawal**, Managing Director of Sage Group

**I**n the landscape of contemporary Indian enterprise, Architect Shivani Agrawal, Managing Director of The SAGE Group, represents a distinct synthesis: the precision of architectural thinking applied to institutional transformation. Her leadership across education, healthcare, real estate, and hospitality reflects deliberate evolution—guided by systems, powered by technology, and anchored in human well-being.

### Legacy Transformed.

In an age when inheritance is often mistaken for achievement, Shivani Agrawal stands apart. Born into an established enterprise, she has treated inheritance not as a privilege to be preserved, but as a responsibility to be expanded. The silver she inherited, she has methodically turned into gold.

### Architecture as Philosophy

Her architectural training is foundational to her leadership. At SAGE Realty Bhopal, her design sensibility shapes not merely structures, but ecosystems. From the expansive SAGE University campus to the upcoming five-star SAGE Hilton Hotel, her vision integrates functionality with experience—spaces that serve institutional purpose while elevating human interaction.

### Education Reimagined: Systems, Technology, Experience

At SAGE University Bhopal, her earliest intervention was shifting institutions from personality-driven functioning to process driven governance. Core pillars—admissions, examinations, academic delivery, placements, faculty performance and student services—were restructured through SOPs, ERP-enabled workflows and defined accountability frameworks.

Today, the institutions serve over 25,000 students, have facilitated more than 45,000 placements and sustain partnerships with 400+ companies—through repeatable, scalable systems designed to outlast individual leadership.

Technology here is not ornamental. AI-enabled classrooms, adaptive learning platforms, real-time analytics, and AI-assisted assessments have transformed pedagogy. Faculty are empowered by technology, not replaced by it. “Nearly half of learning must now happen beyond the classroom.”

### Healthcare with Heart

At Apollo SAGE Hospitals, a 350-bed multi-specialty facility, she introduced SOP-driven clinical pathways alongside a structured “Happiness Index”—

institutionalising staff well-being and workplace dignity as measurable priorities. The outcome: rising patient satisfaction and recognition among the top three Apollo hospitals nationwide.

“Protocols ensure consistency,” she observes. “But excellence emerges when people feel valued.”

### Strategic Diversification

The upcoming SAGE Hilton Hotel is not a real estate expansion alone, but entry into globally benchmarked hospitality through institutional partnerships and systems-led service delivery.

### From Foundation to Future

In a climate where second-generation leaders—particularly women—are judged harshly, Shivani Agrawal offers a quiet rebuttal through results, not rhetoric.

“I didn't inherit privilege,” she reflects. “I inherited responsibility.”

A caring daughter and young mother, she brings a generational lens to enterprise—prioritising continuity over visibility and durability over speed. In a business environment that rewards expansion, she is focused on endurance—and in the long arc of enterprise, endurance is what ultimately defines significance.

# An Empowered Leader for A Better Tomorrow

Cabinet Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar is reshaping the landscape of women's empowerment, community outreach and children's future in Karnataka through welfare guarantees, economic initiatives, healthcare outreach and structural reforms

**W**omen's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. Lakshmi Hebbalkar stands as a testament to transformative leadership, rooted in welfare, driven by inclusion, and focused on women-led progress as the lone woman minister in the Siddaramaiah-led cabinet and the third woman from the Belagavi district to join the State Council of Ministers.

## A Leader with Purpose

The milestone of 1,000 days in office symbolises not just longevity but impact. The Hon'ble Minister's tenure has been defined by decisive welfare initiatives and a clear commitment to women's empowerment, child development, and the empowerment of disabled and senior citizens. With over 15 years in public service and nearly two decades of active political involvement, she combines academic grounding in political science with grassroots political experience.

Her journey underscores a vital truth: when women lead with vision and commitment, communities flourish.

## Financial Power to Women

One of the most significant milestones of her tenure has been the implementation of the landmark Gruha Lakshmi Scheme. Under this flagship initiative, ₹2,000 is transferred monthly to women heads of households, benefiting over 1.26 crore women across Karnataka. With more than ₹52,000 crore disbursed, the scheme represents more than

financial assistance. It symbolises recognition of women's role in sustaining families and managing household economies.

"Women shoulder greater responsibilities than men. They successfully manage multiple roles, both at home and outside. Every woman has a story of perseverance behind her success." She emphasises. By placing money directly in women's hands, the government has strengthened financial autonomy and decision-making power at the grassroots level.

Beyond direct benefit transfers, the Hon'ble Minister has emphasised long-term economic empowerment. She announced low-interest loans of up to ₹5 crore at just 3% annual interest to support women entrepreneurs in establishing or expanding businesses. Such initiatives aim to transform beneficiaries into job creators, ensuring that empowerment moves beyond welfare toward sustainable economic independence.

## Breaking Barriers Inspiring Minds

Of the state's five flagship guarantee schemes, three directly enhance women's empowerment. The Hon'ble Minister praised the Karnataka

**"For women, there is only one identity — womanhood. No caste, no party divides us. I am proud of the women of this state"**

government for becoming the first state in India to introduce a uniform policy granting 12 days of paid menstrual leave annually for women employees across both government and private sectors. "This landmark decision addresses women's health and dignity and challenges long-standing taboos surrounding menstrual health, bringing the conversation into the mainstream."

The Hon'ble Minister acknowledged the crucial role of government employees in implementing schemes and announced that the Women Employees' Association would soon be allocated office space. She highlighted the Akka Pade safety initiative, implemented jointly by the WCD and Home Department, set to be rolled out in 31 districts, with awareness campaigns involving women employees.

## Strengthening Social Framework

In her role overseeing welfare for persons with disabilities and senior citizens, the Hon'ble Minister introduced a monthly caregiver allowance of ₹1,000 for caretakers of individuals with severe conditions such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis. This initiative reflects her broader philosophy that governance must protect the most vulnerable and recognise unpaid caregiving labour.

Health outreach programmes, including pulse polio drives, free medical camps in underserved areas, HIV awareness initiatives, and girls' education campaigns, further



**Lakshmi Hebbalkar**

Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development, Disabled and Senior-Citizens Empowerment, Government of Karnataka

demonstrate her holistic approach to social development.

Another important cornerstone is her focus on upgrading government school infrastructure in her constituency, including building classrooms and toilets, promoting smart classes, and promoting initiatives for children through the Bal Vikas Academy and supported initiatives for differently abled individuals.

## Shaping a Future-Forward Ecosystem

Major achievements of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are the outcome of Lakshmi Hebbalkar's relentless efforts in strengthening Anganwadi infrastructure, workforce support, preschool education, and technology-driven transparency across Karnataka.

In Budget 2025-26, the monthly

honorarium of Anganwadi Workers was increased by ₹1,000 and that of Anganwadi Helpers by ₹750, effective from April 2025. This enhancement benefits thousands of workers supporting 37 lakh children and strengthens grassroots nutrition and early childhood care services in Karnataka.

Under the "Saksham Anganwadi Scheme", 17,454 Anganwadi centres were sanctioned ₹1 lakh each, with a total allocation of ₹175 crore. LED and audio-visual equipment, ECCE learning materials, and clean storage facilities have been provided. So far, ₹145.39 crore has been spent, significantly strengthening early childcare and learning infrastructure across Anganwadi centres in the State.

For 2025-26, ₹10 crore was allocated to purchase 173 CA sites at a 50% concessional rate for constructing Anganwadi buildings.

₹9.99 crore has been released to 19 districts to acquire 138 sites, with land acquisition and construction processes underway to strengthen urban Anganwadi infrastructure.

₹35 crore under the ICDS-NREGS scheme was released for the construction of 292 Anganwadi buildings in rural areas. Additionally, ₹20 crore was released under the Urban scheme for 100 own buildings in urban areas. All sanctioned works are expected to be completed within the current financial year.

A first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, pre-primary classes (LKG/UKG) were introduced on a pilot basis in 259 Anganwadi centres. It received an encouraging response with increased enrolment and attendance. Following its success, government Montessori/pre-primary classes were launched in a phased manner in 5,000 Anganwadi centres across Karnataka.

Under the ICDS scheme, 69,922 Anganwadi centres serve 3.947 million beneficiaries in the state. Of these, 98.95% (3.912 million) have been Aadhaar-verified and integrated into the Government of India's Poshan Tracker through the Face Recognition System (FRS), securing second place nationally and enhancing transparency in supplementary nutrition distribution.

## A Voice Beyond Politics

As a representative from Belagavi, she has actively driven infrastructure projects, educational improvements, and regional development. From inaugurating surveillance initiatives like 'Syena Drishti' in Udupi to addressing grassroots urban issues, her approach balances local attention with statewide vision.

On this International Women's Day, Lakshmi Hebbalkar's work stands as a reminder that empowerment is not a slogan but a sustained effort built on policy, compassion, and action.



**Ritu Karidhal Srivastava**, Mission Director, Chandrayaan-3, ISRO

## Rocket Woman of India's Flight to Space

Ritu Karidhal Srivastava's scientific brilliance and leadership powered India's defining lunar moment

**F**or many young girls in India dreaming of blazing a trail in science, Ritu Karidhal Srivastava is a beacon of hope. From growing up in Lucknow to emerging as one of India's most accomplished space scientists, she has shown what grit and determination can do when fuelled by passion and talent.

Karidhal Srivastava is hailed as the 'Rocket Woman of India' not without reason. As the mission director of Chandrayaan-3 at Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), she played a crucial role in guiding the spacecraft to achieve a historic soft landing near the moon's south pole in August 2023, making India the first nation to do so.

Before Chandrayaan-3, Karidhal

Srivastava served as the project manager and deputy operations director for India's Mars Orbiter Mission, Mangalayaan, which made history by being the first mission to reach Mars at the first attempt.

But this success didn't come overnight to Karidhal Srivastava; she fought many odds to carve a spot in a field largely dominated by men. Nurturing a strong interest in science and mathematics from a young age, she went on to study physics at the University of Lucknow and then got a Master's degree, also in physics, from Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

After joining ISRO in 1997, Karidhal Srivastava steadily built a reputation as a dependable and skilled space scientist and mission

professional. Over the years, she worked in diverse areas of satellite operations, mission planning and navigation. Her ability to manage complex systems and stay calm under pressure fetched her important responsibilities in several high-profile missions.

Before Chandrayaan-3, Karidhal Srivastava was a key member of India's earlier moon mission, Chandrayaan-2. She had served as Mission Director for Chandrayaan-2 as well, overseeing spacecraft operations. Although the lander did not achieve a soft landing in 2019, the mission provided valuable lessons.

Those experiences directly contributed to the success of Chandrayaan-3, where design improvements and careful planning addressed earlier challenges. As mission director of Chandrayaan-3, she was responsible for coordinating teams, monitoring spacecraft performance and ensuring precise execution at every stage — from launch to lunar descent.

Karidhal Srivastava is known to be a methodical and team-oriented leader, with a strong emphasis on learning from data and past experience. Her scientific acumen and leadership has showcased India's ability to carry out complex space missions with precision and confidence.

Her contributions to science have earned Karidhal Srivastava several awards, including the ISRO Young Scientist Award early on in her career. On various occasions, she has spoken about the importance of hard work, self-belief and continuous learning, especially for young women aspiring to careers in science and technology. Her achievements continue to inspire countless young minds across India to consider a future in space science and engineering.



**Prof Manoshi Roy Chowdhury**, Co-Chairperson, Techno India Group

## Give to Gain

A sneak peek into the spirit and mind space of an empowered woman who fosters leadership and builds ecosystems as a confident decision-maker and an enabler of change

**PROF MANOSHI ROYCHOWDHURY**

**W**hen women give with conviction and clarity, they do not lose power; they multiply it—within themselves and across the world they shape.

We often measure success by what we accumulate—titles, influence, recognition. Yet the most enduring transformations in my life have not come from gathering more, but from giving more.

I grew up in the coalfields of eastern India, where ambition was frequently negotiated against circumstance. Dreams were practical conversations, not poetic indulgences. As the eldest of three daughters, I witnessed both the weight of societal expectation and the quiet rebellion of belief. My father chose belief. He believed his

daughters deserved the sky. That faith became my first inheritance—and my earliest lesson in responsibility.

Life moved forward through marriage, motherhood and duty. When I eventually stepped into the professional world, I encountered invisible qualifiers that often precede women: homemaker, privileged, fortunate. I understood quickly that respect is rarely offered in advance. It is demonstrated—through intent, integrity and the discipline of consistent action.

As I became involved in nurturing institutions across education, healthcare and social development, one truth crystallised: empowerment is not a slogan for conferences. It is a

system. It is access to quality education that fosters curiosity. It is emotional wellbeing that allows individuals to grow with resilience. It is financial independence that strengthens decision-making. Above all, it is self-belief—steady and unshakeable.

Empowerment also demands courage. The courage to enter rooms where you are the only woman at the table and still choose collaboration over confrontation. The courage to lead with empathy in spaces that often reward aggression. The courage to remain authentic in environments that encourage conformity.

The idea of "Give to Gain" resonates deeply with me because every significant milestone in my journey has emerged from contribution. Giving time to build institutions patiently. Giving young minds the confidence to question and create. Giving safe spaces where silent struggles can finally find a voice. In investing in another woman's growth, I discovered that progress is not a finite resource. It expands when shared.

Giving, however, is not self-erasure. It is mentorship. It is inclusion. It is consciously pulling up another chair to the table. Leadership, in its most meaningful form, is not about dominance; it is about dignity. In a nation striving toward inclusive development, women cannot remain symbolic participants in progress. We must be architects of it.

I have often been told that women must adapt to succeed. I disagree. We do not need to dilute our softness to validate our strength. A saree in a boardroom is not a contradiction—it is a reminder that identity and ambition can coexist without apology.

When women give—of their talent, resilience and voice—they do not diminish themselves. They gain purpose. And when purpose aligns with perseverance, change ceases to be a possibility. It becomes inevitable.



**Roshni Nadar Malhotra**, Chairperson, HCL Technologies

## Leading with Vision and Purpose

As Chairperson of HCL Technologies, Roshni Nadar Malhotra blends global business leadership with philanthropy, education reform and purpose-driven impact.

**A** trailblazer in India's corporate landscape, Roshni Nadar Malhotra combines strategic vision with social responsibility, redefining leadership beyond profit and position. As Chairperson of HCL Technologies, she stands at the helm of a global technology powerhouse — shaping boardroom decisions while championing education, inclusion and long-term impact.

The daughter of Shiv Nadar, founder of HCL Technologies, Roshni Nadar stepped into leadership at a time when corporate India was still adjusting to the idea of women at the helm of major technology enterprises. In 2020, she became the Chairperson of HCL Technologies, one of India's largest IT services companies, marking a historic milestone as the first woman to lead

a listed Indian IT company of its scale.

Her journey, however, has not been defined merely by legacy. Educated at Northwestern University and later earning an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, she began her professional life in media and communications before formally joining HCL. Over the years, she developed a reputation for strategic clarity, long-term vision and calm decisiveness — qualities that proved crucial as the company expanded its global footprint.

Under her stewardship, HCL Technologies has strengthened its presence across continents, navigating digital transformation, global competition and post-pandemic market shifts. Her leadership style reflects a blend of

analytical rigour and human-centric management — an approach that resonates strongly with evolving definitions of womanhood in leadership: empathetic yet assertive, inclusive yet ambitious.

Beyond the boardroom, Roshni Nadar's impact is equally profound in philanthropy. She serves as the Chairperson of the Shiv Nadar Foundation, which focuses on transformative education initiatives in India. The Foundation runs institutions such as Shiv Nadar University and the VidyaGyan Leadership Academies, aimed at nurturing talented students from underprivileged backgrounds. For her, education is not charity — it is nation-building.

Her contributions have earned wide recognition. She has consistently featured in Forbes' lists of the World's Most Powerful Women and India's richest self-made women, reflecting both her corporate stature and entrepreneurial acumen. In 2017, she was honoured with the Vogue India Businesswoman of the Year award, celebrating her growing influence in global business. She has also been listed among Fortune India's Most Powerful Women in Business, further cementing her place among the country's most influential corporate leaders.

On Women's Day, Roshni Nadar's journey offers a powerful narrative: that leadership is not about inheriting power, but about earning trust and expanding impact. She exemplifies a form of womanhood that transcends stereotypes — one that balances enterprise with empathy, wealth with welfare, and ambition with accountability.

In a world where women continue to break ceilings across industries, her story underscores an essential truth: when women lead, they do not merely occupy positions — they transform them.

## Beyond Classrooms, Building Leaders

Leading with purpose and empathy, Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi is quietly shaping education and women's leadership in Northeast India



**Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi**, Director, NERIM Group of Institutions, Guwahati

**I**n a region often marked by challenges, Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi, Director of the NERIM Group of Institutions, Guwahati, Assam, stands out as a steady leader, expanding quality education for women and youth in the Northeast through action, not slogans.

For Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi, education transcends mere certification. She believes it should instil students with dignity, confidence, and the freedom to forge their own paths. At NERIM—which she warmly refers to as an “academic home”—she has pioneered programmes that extend well beyond the classroom. These initiatives empower students, particularly young women, to envision themselves as leaders, entrepreneurs, and decisive changemakers.

Through skill development, mentoring, and strong academic leadership, she has helped women enter areas such as management and entrepreneurship, fields traditionally dominated by men.

Colleagues and students describe Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi as a leader who listens carefully and works with discipline. She believes lasting change happens when institutions understand the real-life challenges faced by students. This approach has made her a trusted

mentor, especially for first-generation learners who are often navigating higher education without guidance at home.

Women's empowerment, for her, is not limited to special occasions. It is part of her daily work—ensuring safe learning spaces, encouraging women to speak up, supporting them during setbacks, and celebrating their achievements. She strongly believes that when women gain confidence and education, the impact spreads to families, communities, and the wider economy.

Her contributions have been widely recognized through numerous high-profile honours. In 2025, Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi was presented with the Shreemoyee Award (Excellence in Academic Leadership and Leading Educational Institute in Northeast India Led by a Woman), named a Times Icon of the North East by The Times of India, and received the Femina Achievers Award for Excellence in Women's Leadership in Education and Mentorship. Furthermore, she was celebrated with the Outstanding Visionary Academic Leader title at the Times Business Awards North-East, the Mirchi Excellence Award for Academic Leadership, and the Times Now Gems of the North East Award.

Her sustained impact is further evidenced by her recognition as an Eminent Director of Leading Institutes in India for 14 consecutive years (2010–2024). In April 2024, she received the CSR Excellent Director of Leading Institute of India Award. Under her visionary leadership, NERIM was also distinguished with the CSR Top University of India Award, earning a prestigious five-star rating.

With over two decades of experience, she has worked as a teacher, mentor, counsellor, and trainer, conducting consultancy projects and training managers in leadership, communication, and motivation. She was also felicitated by the Governor of Assam for supporting an anti-drug abuse campaign.

Prof (Dr) Sangeeta Tripathi believes her greatest achievement is shaping students into capable professionals and responsible citizens. As she says, leadership is not about personal rewards, but about empowering others with humility and integrity. She represents a generation of women leaders who are not only breaking barriers for themselves but building ladders for others—making education a lifelong mission, not a one-day celebration.

# Empowering Education Elevating Women

Dr Mariazeena Johnson champions the cause of women's empowerment, inclusivity, and transformative education, aligned with the spirit of International Women's Day

**A**cross the globe, celebrating International Women's Day 2026, a powerful campaign themed "Give To Gain" advocates gender equality through purposeful actions, such as sharing knowledge, resources, time, and, importantly, challenging biases to accelerate equality. True to the theme, Dr Mariazeena Johnson, a dynamic educationist, has been consistently making a difference in the lives of countless people and the society at large for decades.

Born to the politician-turned-philanthropist Dr Jeppiaar, she follows her father's footsteps in embracing a holistic approach to education. Her farsighted vision includes redefining the education system while supporting women in areas like STEM, entrepreneurship, leadership, and health.

## Leading the Change

"The education sector has a vast scope of empowerment right from the foundation level." Emphasises Dr Mariazeena Johnson, making the objective of women's empowerment one of the key pillars of success for the institution. "As the chancellor of Sathyabama, I ensure that women are accounted for when drawing any model or policy for implementation." At Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, 70% of the faculty and 85% of hierarchical positions are held by women, thus emerging as a model of women's empowerment and inspiring others to understand and value women and their work to forge a better world.

The staff and students participate in gender-sensitisation training



**Dr Mariazeena Johnson**  
Chancellor, Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology (SIST)

programmes on a regular basis through the implementation of case studies and workshops. "Our educational model is inclusive. The Women Empowerment Bureau conducts several programmes that aid in economic empowerment and social upliftment of underprivileged

women. We take special interest in designing programmes related to awareness of equality and gender studies. Periodically, workshops, seminars, contests, awareness campaigns, rallies, and advice programmes are held to raise awareness of respect for women,

and the concept of equal opportunities is instilled in the students." She explained.

A transformational leader, she inspires both students and educators to push the benchmark to achieve future-forward and sustainable progress in higher education.

## Balancing the Scales

Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology takes utmost care towards embracing gender equality and gender equity, as well as equal representation. "I always recommend that the value of women is not to be taught theoretically but to be practised for better results in society."

In the role of a mentor, Dr Johnson urges women to pursue careers in innovation and technology, taking advantage of new-age developments in the fields of AI/ML. "We provide annual seed money grants to women entrepreneurs in equal proportion to their male counterparts. This technological handholding definitely facilitates businesses and mitigates challenges associated with the business." As an empowered woman, she encourages budding entrepreneurs to drive their dreams of potential start-ups.

Towards the concern of women, she advocates SHGs (Self Help Groups) that take up the challenge of empowering women in society related to digital literacy, making effective usage of technology.

## Inclusion Accelerating Progress

Dr Johnson adds value from the perspective of inclusivity. Under her guidance, Sathyabama provides 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.

Towards creating an inclusive environment that caters to all forms of diversity, the Anbu Foundation is one of her major initiatives. It was

**"Women's empowerment is essential. It is a continuous process, and there can be no pauses in this journey; it must be revisited, reframed, and rejuvenated periodically"**

started with the objective of bringing back happiness in the lives of people. Today, thousands of students, based on their merits, are being provided with the Anbu Scholarship Scheme and a platform to attain higher education.

Dr Johnson has adopted 21 Panchayat schools and 7 villages and is contributing to their all-round development. Dr Johnson supports the skill development courses for the government school children under the My Saturday University initiative, a fun-loving educational programme.

She felicitated India women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur, acknowledging sports as a career option for the girl child. Dr Johnson played a key role in hosting the Chennai Open pickleball event at Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, where she emphasised the university's support for sports and grassroots athletic development as part of broader empowerment and community outreach.

## Safeguarding Women's Health

Various schemes related to health, hygiene, education, and employment opportunities for women, such as Madugai-The Strength, which provides 'health and hygiene' kits to female students, and Anbu She First, etc., were introduced to cater to women's needs at multiple levels in the suburban areas of Chennai.

Dr Johnson established foundations and campaigns such as Blessed to Bleed (free/pro-

affordable sanitary products), Support My School (rural and girl-child support), and vocational skill-building opportunities for youth and girls.

The ANBU initiative was launched to safeguard women's health by issuing ANBU health cards to female students, faculty, and women in the community. These cards provide access to health screenings such as mammograms, diabetes tests, eye and oral care, and more — encouraging women to prioritise their own wellbeing.

## Making A Mark

Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology (SIST), one of the premier higher education institutions in India accredited with the 'A++' grade by NAAC and a 'Category 1 University' under the UGC, stands tall as a hub of innovation and excellence, powered by 23 dedicated research centres that drive cutting-edge discoveries across diverse disciplines. The institution's success in terms of academics, collaborations, groundbreaking research initiatives and student-led innovations making real-world impact are testimony of the visionary leadership and dedication of Dr Mariazeena Johnson.

In recognition of her services in the field of education, Dr Johnson was selected as one of the

Top 12 Women Transforming India in 2016 by NITI Aayog and the UN. She was also honoured by the former President of India Pranab Mukherjee as one of the 100 impactful women of India for her consistent efforts to provide world-class education to all. She was conferred with a doctorate from the University of Madras for her research on Recent Developments in Women Entrepreneurship. Honoured at the Galatta Nakshatra Awards 2025, Dr Mariazeena Johnson features in the Femina Fab List 2025, among others.



**Shveta Arya**, MD, Cummins India Ltd

## Steering Power with Precision and Purpose

Shveta Arya leads Cummins India with strategic clarity, driving sustainable innovation, industrial growth and inclusive leadership in manufacturing.

In the high-stakes world of industrial manufacturing and energy solutions, Shveta Arya has emerged as a decisive and future-focused leader. As Managing Director (MD) of Cummins India, she heads one of India's most trusted power technology firms, guiding it through an era defined by energy transition, regulatory evolution and rapid technological advancement.

With over two decades within the Cummins ecosystem, Arya's rise reflects strategic depth and operational mastery. She has led diverse verticals spanning distribution, customer operations, corporate strategy and business transformation, both in India and global markets. This cross-functional expertise has enabled her to blend granular execution with long-term vision — a combination critical to leading a

publicly listed engineering major.

Cummins India, part of the global powerhouse Cummins Inc., plays a vital role in powering infrastructure, mobility and industry. Under Arya's stewardship, the company has reinforced its market leadership while accelerating innovation in emission-compliant engines, cleaner fuel technologies and sustainable power systems. Her tenure has coincided with India's shift toward stricter emission norms and greener energy frameworks, and she has positioned the company at the forefront of compliance and competitiveness.

A strong proponent of sustainability-led growth, Arya has championed investments in advanced technology, localisation of manufacturing and digital integration across operations. By aligning profitability with

environmental accountability, she has strengthened the company's resilience in volatile market cycles. Her strategic clarity has ensured that Cummins India remains agile, export-competitive and innovation-driven.

Her leadership extends beyond balance sheets. Arya is recognised for fostering a performance culture anchored in collaboration and inclusion. She has consistently advocated for greater diversity in engineering and manufacturing — sectors traditionally dominated by men — encouraging structured pathways for women professionals to thrive in technical and leadership roles. This focus reflects her belief that diversity is not symbolic, but a catalyst for better decision-making and sustainable success.

Arya's contributions have earned her recognition across industry platforms. She has featured in leading business publications' lists of influential women in manufacturing and corporate leadership. Cummins India's consistent operational performance, strong governance standards and strategic expansion during her leadership underscore her impact. Industry observers credit her with strengthening stakeholder confidence while navigating complex economic conditions.

Colleagues describe her as analytical yet approachable — a leader who combines data-driven decision-making with measured communication. Her ability to manage regulatory transitions, supply chain shifts and evolving customer expectations demonstrates a rare blend of technical acumen and executive poise.

At a time when India's industrial sector is redefining itself around sustainability and self-reliance, Shveta Arya stands as a symbol of modern leadership. She represents a generation of women who are not merely entering core industries but shaping their trajectory.

## Trailblazing Insurance Leadership

Girija Subramanian, CMD of New India Assurance, drives innovation, inclusivity, and growth, shaping India's insurance landscape decisively



**Girija Subramanian**, Chairman-cum-Managing Director The New India Assurance Co. Ltd.

Girija Subramanian, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of The New India Assurance, the largest general insurer in India, is a distinguished leader with over 37 years of experience in general insurance and reinsurance. Her dedication, expertise, and pioneering approach make her a true inspiration across the insurance industry. With a clear vision and dedication, she is guiding New India Assurance towards a future that is more progressive, equitable, and impactful for all stakeholders.

She is having the unique distinction of heading two major insurance companies as CMD in quick succession, previously leading the Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited from September 2022 to June 2024. Under her stewardship at New India Assurance, the company recorded a remarkable turnaround, with domestic premium growth surging to 13.71% and market share climbing to 13.39%, a performance that earned her the SKOCH Challenger Award for Excellence in General Insurance in 2025.

A testament to her global standing, Subramanian was a

distinguished Keynote Speaker at the Institute of Directors' (IOD) 2025 London Global Convention on Corporate Governance & Sustainability. She is also a Fellow member of the Insurance Institute of India and an Associate member of the Chartered Insurance Institute, London.

### Key contributions, projects, and leadership impact

New India Assurance has been recognized by FICCI, receiving the prestigious award for 'Women Representation in Senior Management – PSUs.' This honour reflects the organization's commitment to gender diversity, significantly driven by the impactful leadership of Girija Subramanian, CMD.

Subramanian's leadership, supported by the Technical Departments, was instrumental in

**Under Subramanian's leadership, the NIA staged a strong turnaround, with domestic premium growth rising to 13.71%, market share to 13.39%**

the successful launch of packaged policies that align with government initiatives for women's empowerment, notably the Mahila Udyam Bima and Naari Samman Bima

Under the visionary leadership of Girija Subramanian, New India Assurance has strategically expanded its product portfolio to address complex risks and niche market segments, solidifying its status as an industry pioneer. Her tenure has been marked by the introduction of specialized solutions such as Standalone War Insurance for the property sector and Surety Bond - a transformative product that supports India's infrastructure growth by providing a viable alternative to bank guarantees. Furthermore, her commitment to inclusive and affordable healthcare is exemplified by the launch of Paripoorna Mediclaim Ayush Bima, a dedicated health insurance solution tailored specifically for CGHS beneficiaries. These initiatives, alongside the innovative Nischit Suraksha Parametric Insurance and the declaration of FY 2026 as the "MSME Year," underscore her dedication to driving a progressive, equitable, and resilient future for all stakeholders.



**Pia Singh**, Chairperson, DLF Foundation

## Mission with Vision, Empathy and Impact

At the helm of DLF Foundation, Pia Singh advances thoughtful philanthropy that empowers communities and strengthens lives

**A**s the Chairperson of the DLF Foundation, the philanthropic arm of one of India's most influential real estate groups, Pia Singh stands at the intersection of empathy, strategy, and social responsibility. With a calm yet resolute leadership style, she has emerged as a powerful force in India's development sector, steering corporate philanthropy toward meaningful and sustainable impact.

She is also a Director on the Board of DLF Limited and has served in executive positions including Chairperson of DLF Retail Developers Ltd and Director of DT Cinemas Ltd.

Pia Singh has given the DLF Foundation a clear moral compass. This aims at placing people, dignity, and community wellbeing at its core. Under her guidance, the Foundation has evolved beyond conventional corporate social responsibility to become a platform for deep social engagement, especially in areas of education, healthcare, women's empowerment, skill development, and community upliftment.

A graduate of the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, Pia Singh began her career at GE Capital in the US, where she

worked in risk management. She maintains academic links with her alma mater as Co-President of the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for the Advanced Study of India and a member of its Asia Campaign Leadership Committee.

She is also a trustee of Ananda Sangha Trust and the Paramhansa Yogananda Public Charitable Trust, which are spiritual and charitable organisations.

One of her strengths is her ability to blend compassion with structure. Pia Singh understands that good intentions must be supported by strong systems, partnerships, and accountability. The DLF Foundation often works closely with grassroots organisations, experts, and local communities to ensure that interventions are impactful.

Education has been a key pillar of her vision. She has championed initiatives for underprivileged children, recognising education as the most powerful tool to break cycles of poverty. From supporting school infrastructure and digital learning to holistic development, her approach looks beyond classrooms. Healthcare is another area where her leadership has made a visible difference. The Foundation focuses on improving access to essential medical

services, preventive healthcare, and awareness programmes.

Pia Singh is also a strong advocate for women's empowerment. Through skill-building programmes and livelihood initiatives, she has supported efforts that enable women to become financially independent and confident decision-makers in their families and communities. She sees women not as beneficiaries, but as agents of change.

What sets Pia Singh apart is her understated leadership. Colleagues and partners often describe her as thoughtful, hands-on, and deeply committed. She encourages innovation while staying grounded in core values.

At a time when corporate philanthropy is often measured in numbers alone, Pia Singh brings humanity back to the centre of the conversation. Her vision for the DLF Foundation is not about one-time interventions, but about creating sustainable social values that grow stronger with time.

Pia Singh has helped redefine what responsible corporate citizenship can look like in India — quietly impactful, ethically grounded, and firmly focused on building a more inclusive and compassionate society.



**Preeti Chaudhary**, Founder and CEO, Harvest Global Systems

## Engineering Earth Intelligence at Scale

Behind complex technologies and demanding frontiers of Artificial Intelligence stands Preeti Chaudhary—soft-spoken, yet guided by quiet grit, resilience, and unwavering determination.

at scale.

Preeti Chaudhary's entrepreneurial journey is anchored in a formidable corporate foundation. Before establishing HG Systems, she served in senior roles as an Enterprise Applications and Data Center Architect, leading large-scale digital transformation programs across Southeast Asia. Her experience with global technology leaders, including IBM Hong Kong, shaped her expertise in enterprise architecture, infrastructure modernization, and globally benchmarked implementation frameworks. Managing complex, cross-border projects across governments and multinational enterprises instilled in her a systems-driven approach—where scalability, compliance, and resilience are built into the architecture from inception.

Yet her journey has not been defined by technology alone. Operating in capital-intensive, high-skill deeptech and SpaceTech domains, she has witnessed firsthand how structural gaps continue to restrict women's sustained participation. Despite numerous government schemes promoting gender equity in advanced technology sectors, representation remains disproportionately low. In her view, the challenge lies not in policy intent, but in implementation.

Preeti Chaudhary believes gender equity requires measurable accountability. She advocates for independent audit mechanisms that evaluate how government-backed initiatives are executed, who truly benefits, and whether access to funding, leadership roles, and high-

impact technical exposure is equitably distributed. Without transparent monitoring and outcome-based assessments, she maintains, participation statistics will remain stagnant. She has also observed how invisible barriers emerge at mid-management levels—restricted access to mission-critical assignments, limited sponsorship for global certifications, and workplace dynamics that quietly narrow leadership pipelines. These bottlenecks reduce the number of women positioned to undertake high-risk, capital-intensive entrepreneurial ventures in niche technologies.

Rather than approaching these realities with frustration, Preeti responds with reform-oriented clarity. Within HG Systems, she is building a culture anchored in subject-matter expertise, merit-based evaluation, and performance-driven growth. Her leadership emphasizes technical mastery, continuous skill development, and strategic execution—demonstrating that inclusion and excellence are not opposing forces, but complementary strengths.

Her work has earned recognition, including the "Best Quality CEO" award from the Global HR Council and acknowledgment among the "Global Pioneers in GeoAI for Core and Edge" by The Economic Times. Yet her focus remains firmly on long-term impact.

For Preeti Chaudhary, addressing structural challenges is not simply about representation—it is about unlocking national and global competitiveness in emerging sectors that define the future.



**Malavika Hegde**, CEO, Café Coffee Day (CCD)

## Steering CCD with Steadfast Resolve

With composure and conviction, Malavika Hegde has guided Café Coffee Day through adversity, blending financial discipline with resilient, purpose-driven leadership.

**A**t the helm of Café Coffee Day (CCD), Malavika Hegde leads with quiet resilience, restoring confidence in one of India's most recognised consumer brands while preserving its entrepreneurial legacy.

As the CEO of CCD, Hegde stepped into leadership at a defining moment for the company. Following a period of intense uncertainty, she assumed responsibility not only for stabilising operations but also for safeguarding the trust of employees, partners and investors. Her stewardship has since been marked by financial discipline, operational streamlining and a renewed focus on sustainable growth.

Café Coffee Day, founded by her late husband V G Siddhartha, transformed India's urban café culture, making coffee shops accessible social spaces for young consumers. When Hegde took charge, the brand faced mounting debt and market pressures.

Demonstrating resolve and strategic clarity, she led efforts to significantly reduce the company's debt burden through asset monetisation, structured repayments and tighter cost controls. Over the years, CCD has reported a substantial reduction in its overall debt, reinforcing stakeholder confidence and enabling the company to refocus on core operations.

Under her leadership, CCD has prioritised strengthening profitable outlets, optimising store formats and improving unit economics. Rather than pursuing aggressive expansion, Hegde has adopted a calibrated, efficiency-driven approach — emphasising sustainability over scale. This strategic reset has helped the company navigate a highly competitive café and quick-service restaurant landscape while preserving its strong brand recall

across India.

Hegde's leadership style is understated yet firm. Known for her low public profile, she has nonetheless demonstrated decisive governance and accountability. She worked closely with lenders and financial institutions to create transparent restructuring pathways, reinforcing credibility in corporate stewardship. Internally, she has focused on protecting jobs and maintaining organisational morale during challenging transitions — a testament to her people-centric outlook.

Beyond corporate revival, Hegde remains associated with the broader Coffee Day ecosystem, including philanthropic initiatives linked to rural development and community welfare. Her approach balances commercial prudence with social responsibility, reflecting a belief that businesses must create value beyond balance sheets.

Her achievements lie not merely in financial turnaround metrics but in restoring institutional stability. Steering a high-visibility brand through crisis required emotional fortitude as much as business acumen. By ensuring continuity, reducing liabilities and maintaining operational integrity, she has positioned CCD for steady, long-term recovery.

While she does not actively seek awards or public recognition, Hegde is widely acknowledged in business circles for her resilience and stewardship during one of Indian corporate India's most closely watched transitions. Her journey underscores the evolving face of leadership — one defined not by rhetoric, but by responsibility.

Malavika Hegde's story is ultimately about perseverance. Through strategic patience and unwavering commitment, she continues to shape the next chapter of Café Coffee Day with dignity and determination.

## Expanding Canvas, From Classrooms to Cinema

Educationalist-turned-producer and actor Geetha Priya Nagpal brings vision, empathy and social commitment to every role she embraces



**Geetha Priya Nagpal**, Vice Chairperson & Co-Founder – Krupanidhi Group of Institutions, Actor, Social Worker & Philanthropist

**F**or Geetha Priya Nagpal, life has never followed a rigid blueprint. What began in 1985 with just seven students in a small classroom has grown into a thriving educational ecosystem of nearly 10,000 students from over 35 countries and a vibrant alumni network exceeding 85,000.

Yet, even after building one of Bengaluru's respected education groups, Krupanidhi Group of Institutions, she chose to step into an entirely new arena — cinema. Her upcoming Kannada film *Aparichite*, is set for release in the last week of March which addresses issues close to her heart — contemporary social concerns with sensitivity.

Her journey in education was organic. There were no grand strategies, only commitment. Word of mouth, personal attention and a family-like atmosphere helped the institution expand steadily. Financial struggles, infrastructure hurdles and manpower shortages marked the early years, but she met them with discipline and resilience.

Equally central to her leadership has been her belief in emotional intelligence — the ability to listen, empathise and respond thoughtfully — which she considers essential in building

institutions and nurturing people.

Under her guidance, Krupanidhi has grown into a comprehensive educational environment-friendly ecosystem comprising a Business School, Pharmacy College, Physiotherapy College, Nursing College, Degree College, Pre-University College, Residential PU College and an International School. She believes that education must shape character as much as it builds careers.

Geetha Priya Nagpal often credits her grandmother as her greatest role model, whose quiet strength and wisdom shaped her leadership style.

After decades in education and social service, cinema entered her life unexpectedly last year — a space she embraced not for glamour, but for purpose. Cinema has reach. It can influence thought. So why not use it

**Equally central to her leadership has been her belief in emotional intelligence, which she considers essential in building institutions and nurturing people.**

meaningfully? she says. As a producer, Geetha Priya Nagpal now ensures that every story aligns closely with her values. Like her debut project *Thayavva*, her upcoming film, *Aparichite*, in which she plays a lead role, too seeks to challenge conventional stereotypes and champion socially relevant storytelling.

Balancing education, cinema and family life, she credits patience, discipline and time management — qualities honed through decades in academics. Spontaneity and intuition guide her choices.

She believes women are inherently capable — natural managers, nurturers and leaders. Financial independence, she insists, is crucial for dignity and security. At the same time, she strongly argues that homemaking must be economically valued, for every contribution deserves recognition.

An MBA graduate, Geetha Priya Nagpal blends professionalism with empathy and has received several national and international awards.

From nurturing students to producing purposeful films, Geetha Priya Nagpal demonstrates that reinvention is possible at any stage, and that leadership can evolve while staying true to its core values.



**Monika Shergill**, Chief, Netflix India (Content)

## Shaping India's Global Screen Voice

Monika Shergill leads Netflix India's content vision, championing bold Indian stories that resonate powerfully with audiences worldwide.

In an era when Indian entertainment is no longer confined to local screens, Monika Shergill stands out as one of the most influential architects of this transformation. As Vice President – Content at Netflix India, she has been at the forefront of expanding the reach, depth and diversity of Indian narratives — crafting a content strategy that resonates deeply at home and captivates audiences internationally.

Shergill's journey to this leadership role spans over two decades, beginning in journalism and documentary filmmaking, where she reported on social and environmental issues with courage and clarity. Her early work included covering challenging assignments

and producing documentaries that tackled pressing real-world themes — laying the foundation for a career built on storytelling with purpose.

Before joining Netflix India in 2019, Shergill held senior programming roles at leading media networks including Viacom18 Digital Ventures, where she helped launch VOOT, and notable stints at Star India and Sony, contributing to both scripted and unscripted content. These roles honed her ability to balance creativity with audience insight — a skill she brought to the world's largest streaming platform.

At Netflix India, Shergill oversaw one of the most dynamic periods of content expansion in the platform's history. Under her

leadership, Netflix India produced a string of critically acclaimed and commercially successful originals — from Delhi Crime and Khakee — The Bihar Chapter to Rana Naidu, Guns & Gulaabs and the Academy Award-winning documentary The Elephant Whisperers. Her strategic vision has helped Netflix India become one of the company's fastest-growing markets globally, with a surge in both viewer engagement and subscription base, particularly through strong regional storytelling.

Shergill's commitment to authentic Indian voices has not only advanced the platform's footprint but also spotlighted Indian creativity on the global stage. Series such as Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar and IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack have drawn international attention, with the latter featuring in global Top 10 charts in dozens of countries — testament to the universal power of locally rooted narratives.

Her leadership has earned her recurring recognition among the industry's elite. She features on influential lists such as The Hollywood Reporter's "35 Most Powerful Women in International Television", Variety's "500 Most Influential Business Leaders", Fortune India's Most Powerful Women rankings and other distinguished industry honours — underscoring her impact on media and entertainment.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Shergill represents a new archetype of women's leadership — one defined by creative conviction, strategic innovation and cultural empathy. She has shown that leadership in media is not just about charting business growth, but about nurturing stories that reflect the complexity and diversity of society.

## Steering Success: A Legacy of Care

ISIC upholds a legacy of compassionate service, innovation, and excellence, serving society with empathy and unwavering commitment

**Q You are the one carrying forward the vision of Major HPS Ahluwalia. What responsibilities come with that inheritance? What values from him guide your leadership style today?**

Life with Hari was deeply fulfilling, yet it carried the weight of a beautiful challenge. He ensured I was by his side in every endeavor, whether in physical presence or in spirit. Today, ISIC stands as the crowning testament to his legacy—a true service to mankind.

Carrying this legacy forward is a profound honor, yet it requires a careful balance between cherished traditions and modern evolution. While we are constantly expanding, we remain anchored to his original vision, guided by the same core values of compassion, empathy, and ethics.

Every new initiative we introduce is rooted in these principles, validated by measurable outcomes and positive human experiences. Hari was, above all, a man of the people. In honoring his passion, I maintain his open-door policy, ensuring that our employees, patients, and visitors always find a place where they are heard and valued.

**Q What message would you give to women who suddenly find themselves caregivers of a patient and simultaneously must share the office part?**

As a caregiver myself, I know firsthand

how difficult it is to prioritize personal time. Yet, we must embrace the truth that looking after a loved one necessitates looking after ourselves.

Maintaining a work-life balance is a constant journey, but it is essential to prioritize moments of joy and personal fulfilment. Burnout is a common, often silent reality in our line of work; it is not a sign of weakness, but a signal for support. I encourage everyone to stay mindful of their own limits and to seek help whenever it is needed. Our mission of compassion must start with the compassion we show ourselves

**Q What new priorities or innovations are you focusing on in leadership- technology, training, or access to care?**

I lead this organization anchored in our original vision. Alongside the dedicated team at ISIC, we are committed to establishing a national benchmark for innovation and excellence. Our focus remains steadfast on the highest standards of healthcare delivery, patient safety, and the continuous advancement of clinical outcomes. As we look toward future expansion, our growth will never come at the cost of our founding principle:



**Bholi Ahluwalia**, Chairperson, ISIC Multispeciality Hospital

servicing society without compromise. We move forward with the belief that world-class medical excellence and deep social responsibility must always go hand in hand.

**Q On International Women's Day, what would you tell young girls about building resilience and purpose in life?**

To every young woman finding her path: Your purpose is defined by whatever sets your soul on fire. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' ambition—there is only your passion, your strength, and your belief in yourself.

Do not allow the voices of others to drown out your inner conviction. Growth requires the courage to take risks; it is only by stepping into the unknown that you discover the true extent of your capabilities.

Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly, you will find yourself doing the impossible.

Stay resilient and maintain a positive perspective. Understand that failure is not the end of the road—it is a vital part of the journey and a necessary stepping stone toward victory. Your potential is limitless; you only need the courage to begin



**Lalitha Nataraj**, Managing Director & CEO, NPCI Bhim Services

## Driving India's Trusted UPI App Forward

Lalitha Nataraj leads BHIM Services with a focus on secure, inclusive, and scalable digital payments

**L**alitha Nataraj is a senior banking and payments professional with decades of experience in India's financial services ecosystem. She is currently the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NPCI BHIM Services Ltd (NBSL), the wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), entrusted with the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) UPI app.

BHIM was originally launched in December 2016 to accelerate adoption of digital payments. It is the official reference app and public-sector counterpart to private UPI players. NBSL has also launched BHIM 3.0 with enhanced features including broader language support and accessibility in low-connectivity areas

Lalitha Nataraj is responsible for

strengthening BHIM as a trusted, accessible, and secure digital payments platform. BHIM enables millions of users to make instant bank-to-bank payments using mobile phones. Under her leadership, the focus has been on improving user experience, enhancing security, expanding merchant adoption, and increasing the app's relevance.

According to her colleagues, under Nataraj's leadership, BHIM is redefining what a public digital payments app should optimise for at scale. It aims at not just convenience, but confidence, inclusion, and real-world relevance.

Previously, Lalitha Nataraj built a distinguished career in the banking sector. This includes a position as head of Digital Partnership Payments at IDFC Bank. At ICICI Bank, she worked in different roles

across retail banking, transaction banking, operations, and digital initiatives. She has been closely associated with the evolution of digital banking in India. At ICICI Bank, she played an important role in driving technology-led transformation, process automation, and customer-centric innovation. Her experience in managing large teams and complex operations prepared her well for leading a platform like BHIM.

Lalitha Nataraj is known within the industry for her calm leadership style and emphasis on governance and compliance. In a sector where trust and security are critical, she has consistently highlighted the importance of data protection, fraud prevention, and seamless grievance redressal. These priorities are particularly significant for BHIM, which serves users across urban and rural India, including many first-time digital payment users.

As MD and CEO of NPCI BHIM Services, she works with banks, regulators, fintech partners, and government stakeholders to ensure that BHIM remains aligned with India's digital public infrastructure goals. Her leadership supports NPCI's vision of promoting cashless transactions while ensuring financial inclusion and ease of access for all sections of society. Academically, she holds strong professional credentials that complement her practical experience.

Overall, Lalitha Nataraj represents a blend of traditional banking discipline and modern digital payments leadership. At a time when UPI has become a global benchmark for real-time payments, her role at NPCI BHIM Services is critical in ensuring that one of India's flagship digital payment apps remains reliable, secure, and accessible to millions of users every day.

## Balancing Business, Passion, and Purpose

Meet Silky Jain Marwah, the driving force behind Tulas Institute, Tulas International School, and Netpuppys. balancing leadership responsibilities with personal life, inspiring others with her story.



**Silky Jain Marwah**, Executive Director Tulas Group  
Co Founder Netpuppys

**Q What inspired you to explore digital marketing alongside running Tulas College, and what drives your passion for this new venture? What's the story behind it?**

The word nepotism exists in any business today, and I experienced it firsthand, especially at the start of my career. When my father handed me Tulas Institute, it was a four-year-old institution with immense potential. I invested my first 5 years when kids my age were travelling the world, doing all the fun stuff. I put in the hard work, building my own name and the institution's reputation in the education sector. Despite the success, I felt a lingering desire to create something of my own, something that wasn't tied to family legacy. Marketing has always fascinated me – I'm a creative person at heart, and the dynamic nature of digital marketing drew me in. When I stumbled upon it, it clicked. I saw an opportunity to merge my creativity with a growing industry, and that's when Netpuppys was born. It was a risk, but it felt like the right time to take the leap.

**Q Being a woman entrepreneur and leader, what challenges did you face in the early years of**

**building your company in the digital marketing sector?**

As a woman entrepreneur and leader, I didn't face any specific challenges related to my gender in the early years of building Netpuppys. The hurdles I encountered were more about navigating the digital marketing landscape, building a strong team, and establishing our presence in Gurgaon. Specifically, transitioning from Dehradun post-COVID, hiring the right talent, and getting people to work from the office were tough. Creating a team of dynamic Gen Zs was a challenge, but my education background and adaptability helped me navigate these obstacles.

**Q What does Women's Day mean to you personally?**

I believe in celebrating moments, not just days. For me, Women's Day is a reminder to appreciate the everyday moments of empowerment and connection with women in our lives – the small wins, the breakthroughs, and the everyday efforts that often go unnoticed. Instead of focusing on the day itself, maybe it's about creating a culture where we acknowledge and celebrate women's achievements, big or small, every day.

**Q How do you balance leadership responsibilities with personal life and wellbeing?**

When I was single, work was my life, and I was completely focused on building my organisation and creating a name for myself. I was driven, and my work schedule was pretty flexible, so I could put in long hours and pursue my goals without many distractions. After getting married, things changed – I had to balance home and work, which was a challenge, but I managed to make it work. But now, as a mother of two, yes you've read it right, as a mother of two, I must say this is the craziest time, and it's not easy. You have to take care of the needs of your children, manage the home and kitchen, and still keep up with office work. It's a constant juggling act, and I must say, I'm lucky to have a super supportive husband who's been a rock in helping me create this balance – The biggest change is that my priorities have shifted – my kids are now my top priority, a new kind of stress, but it's also incredibly rewarding. As women, we're natural multitaskers, and if we have the will to make it work, it will. For me, that's what has made the difference.



Vinita D Gupta, CEO, Lupin Ltd

## Shaping a global future in pharma leadership

At the helm of Lupin Limited, Vinita D. Gupta exemplifies a rare blend of inherited vision and earned authority

As Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Lupin Limited, a pharma major, the journey of Vinita D Gupta stands out as a compelling narrative of legacy, global perspective, and purpose-driven leadership. She represents a generation of women leaders who are not merely inheriting institutions but redefining them for a fast-evolving global healthcare landscape.

Daughter of Lupin's founder Dr. Desh Bandhu Gupta, she grew up in an environment where medicines were viewed not simply as commercial products but as instruments of social good. This early exposure shaped her value system, instilling a strong commitment to affordable healthcare and scientific excellence. However, her ascent within the organisation has been

driven as much by academic rigour and professional capability as by lineage.

A pharmacy graduate from the University of Mumbai, she went on to earn an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management in the United States. This combination of scientific training and global management education has enabled her to steer a complex, research-driven pharmaceutical enterprise across highly regulated international markets.

Joining Lupin in 1992, Gupta played a pivotal role in shaping the company's global strategy and expanding its footprint beyond India. When she assumed the role of CEO in 2013, she brought with her a deep understanding of regulatory pathways, capital allocation, and long-term research investments. Under her leadership,

Lupin evolved from a volume-focused generics manufacturer into a research-oriented pharmaceutical organisation with a growing emphasis on complex generics, specialty therapies, and biosimilars.

Despite leading a multinational enterprise, Gupta is widely regarded as a grounded and private individual who maintains a careful balance between professional responsibilities and family life. Colleagues often cite her disciplined approach, quiet leadership style, and preference for substance over visibility as defining personal traits. This balance has made her a relatable role model for many women navigating demanding careers.

Her leadership philosophy reflects a synthesis of inherited values and contemporary management practices. Integrity, patient-centricity, and long-term thinking remain central to her decision-making, while her emphasis on regulatory compliance, quality excellence, and ethical business conduct has strengthened Lupin's credibility in global markets. Internally, she has championed inclusion, mentoring women professionals and encouraging greater participation of women in research, manufacturing, and leadership roles.

Gupta's journey illustrates how legacy can serve as a foundation rather than a constraint. By combining global education, strategic foresight, and a strong ethical framework, she has positioned Lupin as a future-ready pharmaceutical enterprise. Her story is not merely about breaking barriers but about building resilient institutions that endure — a testament to leadership rooted in empathy, discipline, and vision.

## Turning Curiosity into Clean Energy Leadership

With expertise across IT, agriculture and renewable energy, Dr Chitra Rajan leads Radix Lifespaces with innovation and sustainable vision



Dr Chitra Rajan, Founder and Managing Director of Radix Lifespaces Pvt Ltd

**Q Energy and engineering are often male-dominated sectors. What drew you to renewable energy?**

There was no grand ambition to enter a male bastion. It started with curiosity. While managing my coffee estate, I noticed the large volume of organic waste generated during processing. Discarding it felt irresponsible. I wondered if it could be converted into something useful.

We installed a small biogas plant. Initially, it worked well. But Coorg's long monsoons and low temperatures reduced gas production. Instead of giving up, we shifted the system to our city residence and began using kitchen waste. That experiment revealed something larger — India faces mounting waste and rising energy demand. Converting waste into fuel addresses both. What began as a small trial evolved into a clear direction. Today, we operate multiple plants, with more underway.

**Q What challenges did you encounter while scaling into bio-NG and waste-to-energy?**

Technology was not the primary obstacle. India has a long history with biogas; even in the 19th century, Pune experimented with biogas-based street lighting. The science is stable and proven.

The bigger challenge is perception. Bio-CNG is still seen as a waste-

disposal solution rather than mainstream energy infrastructure. That mindset affects funding, policy attention and long-term planning. For real scale, the sector needs recognition as a core energy contributor, not a peripheral environmental fix.

**Q What policy gaps need urgent attention?**

Offtake assurance is a major issue. Oil marketing companies require us to commit to significant production volumes, which demand heavy capital investment. Yet there is no guaranteed procurement. For banks, this becomes a risk. Without a secure buyer, financing turns difficult.

With policy clarity, growth would accelerate significantly.

**Q Why do fewer women enter this field?**

Capability is not the barrier. Operational realities are. Plants are

**Sustainability needs voices considering families, communities, and the future. Those most affected must step forward to shape meaningful solutions.**

often located on city outskirts, require large land parcels and function round the clock. The workforce handles raw waste, which brings safety and logistical concerns.

However, women add a vital perspective. When others assess land and utilities, I ask about worker welfare, medical access and safety. Sustainability must include human considerations. That holistic lens strengthens projects.

**Q How has your leadership evolved over time?**

Earlier, I was deeply involved in daily operations. Today, my focus is strategic — plant design, efficiency upgrades and exploring future solutions like plastic-to-fuel technologies. Clean energy must be commercially viable, but it must also serve long-term environmental goals.

**Q What is your message to women on International Women's Day?**

Women tend to think holistically — about long-term impact, families, and communities. My message is simple: women must step forward and take the lead. Do not limit yourself based on how a sector is perceived. Climate change and policy decisions impact women deeply at the ground level. If we are the most affected, we must also be the ones shaping solutions.



**Praveena Rai**, MD & CEO, MCX

## Guiding India's Commodity Markets Through Change

Praveena Rai leads MCX with deep market experience, focusing on trust, technology and long-term resilience

**P**raveena Rai assumed charge of the Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd. (MCX) at a time when India's commodity derivatives market is expanding in scale, sophistication and regulatory significance. As Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, she leads the country's largest commodity derivatives exchange, which anchors price discovery and risk management across key segments of the real economy.

She took charge in October 2024, beginning a five-year term at MCX, an institution central to India's commodity ecosystem. MCX provides a transparent and regulated platform for trading in commodities such as gold, silver, crude oil, base metals and agricultural products. Through price discovery and risk management, the exchange supports farmers, manufacturers, traders and investors, helping them navigate market volatility.

Praveena Rai brings with her more than three decades of experience across banking, payments and financial services. Before joining MCX, she served as the Chief Operating Officer of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the organisation that transformed the way Indians

transact digitally. At NPCI, she played a key role in scaling landmark platforms and strengthening operational systems that now handle billions of transactions every month.

Her earlier career includes senior leadership roles at global and Indian banks. She worked with HSBC as the Regional Head of Payments for the Asia-Pacific region and also held important positions at Citibank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. She handled complex portfolios in transaction banking, cash management and payment solutions, building a strong reputation for execution and strategic clarity.

Praveena Rai holds an engineering degree from the College of Engineering, Guindy, Chennai, and is an alumna of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. She has also undertaken advanced leadership training at the Wharton School in the United States, further sharpening her strategic thinking and global outlook.

As MD and CEO of MCX, her focus is on strengthening governance and guiding the exchange through a phase of renewal and growth. Her background in digital platforms and large-scale systems is expected to support MCX as it upgrades

technology, enhances market efficiency and explores new opportunities in product innovation.

She is also seen as a steady leader at a time when market confidence and regulatory compliance are critical. Her appointment received regulatory approval, reflecting trust in her ability to lead a systemically important financial institution. Under her leadership, MCX is expected to deepen its engagement with market participants while maintaining transparency and robust risk management practices.

Praveena Rai's distinction lies in institution-building at scale. At NPCI, she was part of the leadership team that helped transition India's digital payments ecosystem from an emerging innovation to a high-volume, always-on financial backbone. Her journey reflects the growing presence of women in leadership roles across India's financial sector. She has been featured among India's leading women in finance, including inclusion in industry leadership lists such as Forbes India's W-Power List 2024.

With experience, balance and a forward-looking mindset, Praveena Rai stands at the centre of an institution vital to India's economic infrastructure.

## Preparing India's Future Leaders

Niru Agarwal is redefining education by equipping young minds with the skills, confidence and values needed for a rapidly changing world



**Niru Agarwal**, Managing Trustee, Greenwood High International School

**N**iru Agarwal is reshaping what education means in India with a clear vision, deep commitment, and the courage to do things differently.

In a world being transformed by technology, climate change, and unprecedented challenges, she asks a simple yet powerful question: Are we preparing our children for the world they'll actually inherit? Her life's work has been about making sure the answer is yes.

At Greenwood High International School, she has built something meaningful: a learning environment that goes beyond grades to grow confident, capable young people. The school is recognized nationally because it reflects her belief that true education encompasses leadership, creativity, sports, technology, and the ability to think independently.

She's created classrooms where students question, create, collaborate, and solve real problems. They work on entrepreneurship projects, engage with new technologies, and tackle challenges that prepare them for careers that don't even exist yet. Learning becomes alive, relevant, and connected to their futures.

### Building Skills for the Need of the Hour

Niru understands that India's greatest strength is its young people. Potential alone isn't enough though. Young people need real skills that lead to real opportunities. That's why she's been a strong advocate for vocational training and upskilling, creating pathways that give students both knowledge and the practical ability to build independent, fulfilling lives.

She's also deeply committed to sustainability as a lived responsibility. Students at Greenwood grow up understanding that caring for the environment is essential. It's woven into how they learn and live every day, preparing them to be future-ready citizens who can lead responsibly.

### Creating Opportunity Where It's Needed Most

Niru's vision extends far beyond her own institution. She believes

**"The future of India will be written by the children we educate today. Our responsibility is to prepare them well."**

every child deserves a quality education, no matter where they come from. That conviction has led her to work closely with government schools, supporting better classrooms, safer facilities, clean water, and access to technology. These are investments in children who deserve the same opportunities as anyone else.

Her work in underserved communities is about restoring something fundamental: the belief that education can change your life. By improving schools and learning environments, she's opening doors that have been closed for too long.

She also brings her experience to policy discussions, working with government bodies to help shape education reforms that reach more children across the country. Her influence comes from doing the work, walking the talk.

### Leading with Purpose

Niru Agarwal is helping write a better future for Indian education. Her leadership is thoughtful, grounded, and deeply human. She's preparing young people to lead with integrity, intelligence, and courage, giving India's next generation the foundation they need to thrive



**Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai**  
Surgeon Vice Admiral, DG Medical Services, Indian Navy

## Leading Surgeon and Senior Medical Strategist in Indian Navy

Dedicating her life to serving the nation, Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai combines medical expertise with naval leadership

**V**ice Admiral Kavita Sahai commands respect as a distinguished leader in naval medical services within the Indian Navy. She currently serves as the Director General of Medical Services (DGMS), the senior medical flag appointment responsible for the Indian Navy's medical services. She oversees medical operations for the naval force, ensuring world-class medical attention whether at sea, on shore, or deployed in challenging environments.

Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai has built a career that reflects both clinical brilliance and administrative efficiency. An alumnus of the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, she specialised in Pathology and went on to super-specialise in Oncopathology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. She

has served as Professor and Head of the Department of Laboratory Sciences at the Army Hospital (Research and Referral) and Base Hospital, Delhi Cantt, and as Professor in the Department of Pathology at AFMC, Pune.

She was awarded the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) Fellowship (USA) in 2013-14. She has authored over 100 research papers in national and international medical journals.

Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai was commissioned into the Army Medical Corps in December 1986, marking nearly four decades of service in military medicine. She has held leadership roles at Army medical institutions (AFMC, AHRR, BHDC), medical research units, and training institutes. She has championed the modernisation of

medical facilities, introduced state-of-the-art technologies, and strengthened preventive healthcare initiatives.

Her career is a testament to resilience, dedication, and an unyielding spirit. Before becoming DGMS (Navy), she was the first woman Commandant of the Army Medical Corps (AMC) Centre & College as well as Officer-in-Charge of AMC Records. She is also the first woman officer elected as the Colonel Commandant of the Army Medical Corps. She has been awarded the Sena Medal (SM) in 2024 and the Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) in 2018.

Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai is among a small group of women officers in the Indian Armed Forces to attain three-star rank, and is the fourth woman to hold the rank of Vice Admiral, a distinction that places her among the most senior women leaders in uniform.

Her efforts have enhanced the efficiency and reach of medical services across the Navy. Her insights have helped shape programmes that safeguard the health of personnel during natural disasters, emergencies, and complex naval operations. The Vice Admiral has consistently emphasised structured training, ethical practice, and continuous learning, ensuring that military medical professionals are equipped to meet evolving clinical and operational challenges.

Her journey has been marked by an unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of service personnel. Vice Admiral Kavita Sahai exemplifies the epitome of a healer and leader. Her work has touched countless lives, ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of naval personnel while strengthening India's defense medical framework. She remains a symbol of excellence, compassion, and unwavering service to the nation.



**Dr. Neema Agarwal**, Additional Managing Director, Noida Institute of Engineering & Technology,

**A**t a time when higher education is being redefined by technology, global competition and industry disruption, Dr. Neema Agarwal has emerged as a transformative force. As the Additional Managing Director of Noida Institute of Engineering & Technology (NIET), Greater Noida, she is steering one of North India's leading institutions toward innovation, inclusivity and academic excellence, while redefining what it means to prepare students for the future.

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world" is more than an inspiring line for Dr. Agarwal — it is a philosophy that defines her approach to leadership.

No wonder, she stands out as a dynamic and future-focused leader driving meaningful change. She represents a new generation of women leaders who combine strategic vision, academic depth and inclusive values to build institutions that equip students for a competitive global environment.

With a distinctive academic foundation as a medical doctor, radiologist and management postgraduate, Dr. Agarwal brings interdisciplinary clarity to education

## Shaping Future-Ready Education with Vision

Driving innovation and inclusivity in higher education, Dr. Neema Agarwal is redefining future-ready learning at NIET, Greater Noida

leadership. Education, for her, is not merely a pathway to employment but a powerful instrument of social transformation. This belief fuels institutional growth and student empowerment at NIET.

Over the past two decades, as technical and management institutes have expanded across India, she has remained focused on redefining the purpose of higher education. Her central objective has been to ensure that institutions move beyond awarding degrees and instead cultivate capable, confident and future-ready professionals equipped to navigate uncertainty and change.

Under her stewardship, NIET has strengthened its academic framework and reinforced its reputation as one of North India's respected private engineering and management institutions. Her leadership emphasizes academic excellence, research innovation and robust industry integration. She has actively promoted faculty development programmes, research publications, patents and innovation-driven initiatives that nurture a culture of inquiry, creativity and continuous improvement across campus.

Recognising the rapidly evolving economic and corporate environment, Dr. Neema Agarwal has ensured that NIET's curriculum remains aligned with emerging technologies and industry expectations. Academic programmes integrate technical proficiency with soft skills, communication, analytical thinking and adaptability.

A strong advocate of digital transformation in education, Dr. Neema Agarwal has facilitated collaborations

that bring advanced technology platforms directly to students. Through initiatives such as the Tableau Lab established in collaboration with Salesforce, NIET integrates analytics, AI-driven tools and enterprise-level solutions into everyday learning. These initiatives provide hands-on exposure to data analysis, scalable digital ecosystems and innovation frameworks that reflect real-world industry practices.

Empowerment remains central to her leadership philosophy. In a field historically dominated by men, she has consistently championed gender inclusivity in engineering and management education. Mentorship platforms, equal opportunities and supportive institutional policies enable women students and faculty members to pursue careers in technology, research and leadership with confidence and ambition.

Her administrative acumen and visionary governance have earned her notable recognitions, including the Next Gen Women Edupreneur Award 2025 and a feature in Fortune India's 40 Under 40. These honours acknowledge not only institutional progress but also her commitment to progressive, quality-driven education.

Beyond infrastructure, accolades and rankings, what truly defines Dr. Neema Agarwal is clarity of purpose. She views education as a transformative force that builds character, competence and social responsibility. Through her work at NIET, she continues to shape not only an institution but generations of learners prepared to lead with knowledge, integrity and impact.



**Portia Rohila**, Founder of 'Pleasuring The Senses Yoga'

## Healing Through Mindful Alignment

In a world that numbs awareness, 'Pleasuring the Senses' allows body and mind to blossom back into harmony, says Portia Rohila

I'm Portia Rohila, the founder of Pleasuring the Senses Yoga in Anjuna, Goa where I teach Iyengar style yoga—a practice that is deeply rooted in alignment, mindfulness and a slow paced practice. My journey to yoga wasn't a linear one. I started out studying law, but midway through my studies, I had a life-changing realization: this path wasn't right for me. Personal experiences led me to yoga, and from the very beginning, it became a transformative practice that brought both physical and mental healing.

I teach Iyengar style yoga, which is known for its precision, attention to detail, and the use of

props to support proper alignment. The practice is especially effective for modern-day issues such as poor posture, the physical consequences of long sitting hours, hormonal imbalances, and the impact of eating processed foods.

**Through Iyengar yoga, we connect deeply with our body, cultivate presence, balance mind and body, and discover lasting inner peace**

We live in an age where most of us spend long hours sitting at desks or hunched over phones and computers. This can lead to misalignment in the spine, neck, and shoulders, which often results in discomfort and chronic pain. Iyengar yoga addresses these issues by encouraging proper alignment, and the use of props such as blocks, straps, and blankets helps to ensure that postures are practiced safely and effectively. These props allow us to find support and stability in each asana, making it accessible for all body types and ages. They also enable us to gradually build strength and flexibility, essential for correcting postural imbalances caused by our modern lifestyles.

Asana practice also helps to cleanse the body and makes us more sensitive to what goes on inside. When we listen closely, the body can guide us on what is nourishing and what is not—whether it's about food, movement, or emotional well-being. This deepened awareness fosters a better connection with our own bodies, allowing us to trust and care for ourselves in ways we may have never learned before.

Through consistent practice, we learn to rely on the one thing that will be with us forever—our own body. It's not just about achieving the perfect posture; it's about learning to be present, in tune with our own physical and mental state, and finding peace in the process.

At Pleasuring the Senses Yoga, my goal is to create a safe, nurturing space where you can explore your body, calm your mind, and reconnect with yourself. Whether you're dealing with stress, discomfort, or simply looking to improve your posture and energy levels, Iyengar style yoga provides the tools you need to cultivate lasting wellness, one breath and one posture at a time.

## Empowering Women, Transforming Society

Dr Sohini Sastri embodies empowerment, spirituality, and transformative leadership for women worldwide

Wisdom, spirituality, and humanitarianism are qualities that come to mind when one hears the name Dr Sohini Sastri. She has had a remarkable impact in the occult sciences as a famous astrologer, life coach, philanthropist and winner of the President's Award twice. She comes from a renowned spiritual family and is one of the most sought-after astrologers in India and abroad; her Grand PhD in Astrology from National American University is proof of her outstanding achievements in the field.

In Dr Sastri's view, empowering women is essential for society to advance. The 'Sohini Sastri Foundation,' Dr Sastri's most recent charitable work, is to provide disadvantaged children with access to healthcare, education, and necessities. Her impact has been substantial because of this foundation. Making a positive impact on society through her work is her future goal. She has launched numerous initiatives through her foundation that promote girls' education, vocational training, skill development, and chances for entrepreneurship. Thousands of women have been able to achieve

economic autonomy because to her work. To ensure that young girls from economically disadvantaged households have access to quality education, her organisation offers free education and scholarships. She has also played a significant role in skill-based training programs, which have opened doors for women to a variety of industries.

As a prosperous businesswoman, Dr Sastri advocates for women to overcome obstacles in the industry. She has initiated programs that provide mentorship, financial support, and networking opportunities for prospective women entrepreneurs. Her charity additionally advocates for small-scale companies, facilitating women

**Dr. Sohini Sastri blends spirituality and social service, empowering women and uplifting communities through education, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and compassionate humanitarian initiatives.**



**Dr Sohini Sastri**, 2-times President Award winner and world-renowned KP astrologer

in establishing their own enterprises.

Dr Sastri is actively involved in community development and healthcare in addition to women's empowerment. She has coordinated multiple health camps, hygiene awareness initiatives, and counselling sessions for women with mental health challenges. Her endeavours in delivering legal assistance and support to victims of domestic violence have garnered significant recognition.

As International Women's Day approaches, Dr Sastri anticipates a future characterised by gender equality, universal access to education, and equitable opportunity for women across all sectors. She asserts, "Take pride in your femininity, commemorate your womanhood." She seeks to broaden her foundation's impact, guaranteeing that more women gain access to skill development, legal assistance, and self-employment prospects. Her objective is to establish a society in which every woman can aspire, accomplish, and motivate. Dr Sohini Sastri, through her steadfast commitment, remains a symbol of hope, guiding the pursuit of a more robust and inclusive future.



Ananya Pandey, Actress

## Global Grace Rising

At the crossroads of cinema and couture, Ananya Pandey embodies ambition, craft, and a generation redefining Indian identity worldwide.

In the bright, restless firmament of Hindi cinema, Ananya Pandey occupies a distinctive space, navigating inheritance and self-fashioning with uncommon candour. Actor, fashion presence and digital native, she reflects the restless energy of a generation that refuses to be confined to familiar narratives. Her journey, unfolding under an intense public gaze, is marked not by comfort but by a visible commitment to growth, reinvention and evolving self-assurance.

Her arrival in 'Student of the Year 2' was accompanied by the noise that greets every high-profile debut. But the early attention soon translated into something more enduring. The performance earned her the Filmfare Award for Best Female

Debut, along with other newcomer honours, affirming industry faith in a talent still discovering its edges. Instead of settling into the safety of image, she began testing its elasticity.

Subsequent choices revealed an actor alert to the need for reinvention. In 'Pati Patni Aur Who' she displayed comic lightness; in 'Khaali Peeli' she attempted the grammar of massy romance; and in 'Gehraiyaan' she embraced emotional turbulence, inviting viewers to see fragility, desire and moral ambiguity. The progression suggested not a straight line but a widening circle, each role stretching public perception a little further.

Recognition continued to gather around her evolving persona. She has appeared in influential young achievers' lists and fashion

rankings, nods that acknowledge her ability to speak to audiences beyond cinema halls. These citations, while flattering, also underline a deeper shift: the emergence of performers who must be fluent simultaneously in film, media conversation, and global aesthetics.

That fluency found striking expression when Chanel named her a global ambassador. For many observers, the announcement signalled more than celebrity endorsement. It marked the ease with which a contemporary Indian actor could inhabit international luxury spaces without appearing derivative. Pandey's presence at global showcases and red carpets became shorthand for a country confident of its cultural export.

Yet the sheen of glamour is only part of the narrative. Conscious of the hostility that thrives online, she launched the 'So Positive' initiative, aimed at countering cyberbullying and fostering kinder digital engagement. In lending her platform to conversations on mental wellbeing and respect, she demonstrated that visibility can illuminate as well as dazzle.

Instead of the unreachable star, she offers relatability — speaking openly about learning curves, criticism and the anxiety of constant evaluation. For countless young admirers, particularly girls imagining professional futures, that honesty becomes instructive.

Thus, each award, brand association and film credit folds into a larger portrait: a young Indian professional shaping space for herself in arenas once distant, while remaining tethered to audiences at home. Through missteps and milestones, Ananya Pandey represents motion — outward, experimental, unafraid.



Neha Vijaywargia

Founder-Trustee & Director, People's Group  
Founder, Klickwatt, Founder, The Latest Label

## Trailblazer of Transformation

Neha Vijaywargia, a visionary leader blending strategy, resilience, and entrepreneurship to create institutions that serve thousands every day

In the evolving narrative of Indian entrepreneur, some leaders do not merely occupy positions they shape institutions. Neha Vijaywargia, Director and Trustee of the People's Group, belongs to that rare league of women who have transformed inheritance into impact, and responsibility into legacy.

### Where Purpose Meets Presence

An alumna of Symbiosis International University pune and an MBA in Advertising and Public Relations, she represents a leadership style that is both structured and soulful.

She stepped into the family

enterprise at just 23 not as a symbolic successor, but as an active learner. What followed was more than two decades of immersive work, absorbing institutional intricacies with remarkable precision and a deeply

"DREAM BOLDLY, WORK RELENTLESSLY, LEAD FEARLESSLY, FOR YOUR VISION CAN TRANSFORM INDUSTRIES, EMPOWER COMMUNITIES, AND INSPIRE GENERATIONS BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION"

detail oriented mindset. Over the years, she has contributed to multifold growth, strengthening systems, enhancing governance frameworks, and reinforcing long-term sustainability across the Group's institutions.

### The Woman Beyond the Role

Beyond the boardroom, Neha's life is anchored in quiet curiosity and conscious balance. A passionate reader and an ardent traveller, she draws inspiration from culture, ideas, and the restorative power of nature. This affinity has translated into action through the introduction of eco-conscious practices within the institution from sustainable resource management initiatives to environmentally mindful operational strategies.

Equally significant is her role as a mother to two daughters a responsibility she considers her most grounding leadership lesson. Balancing the demands of institution-building with the rhythms of family life, she believes that harmony is not about perfection, but about presence.

### Powering a Sustainable Tomorrow

Today, her entrepreneurial energy extends into the future of mobility. She is actively leading initiatives in the electric mobility ecosystem building EV charge point operations, deploying electric vehicles, and exploring manufacturing solutions tailored for last-mile delivery and passenger transport. For her, the shift toward electric mobility is not merely a business opportunity; it is a responsibility toward sustainable infrastructure and climate-conscious growth.

A woman of substance, she builds boldly, balances wisely, and leads fearlessly shaping tomorrow with resilience and quiet determination.

Neha Vijaywargia's journey is a testament to what determined, visionary women can accomplish. She has not only built institutions but also empowered communities, strengthened industries, and inspired countless women to lead with courage and conviction.



**Rekha Gupta**, Chief Minister of Delhi

## Leadership Rooted in Action and Inclusion

From student leader to Delhi's Chief Minister, Rekha Gupta's journey reflects resilience, grassroots strength and decisive, inclusive governance

**F**rom the charged corridors of student activism to the commanding office of the Chief Minister of the national capital Delhi, Rekha Gupta has built her career on discipline, grassroots engagement and a firm belief that governance must deliver visible outcomes. Her rise represents not just personal achievement but the growing space for women in decisive leadership roles.

Born on July 19, 1974, in Nandgarh village of Haryana, Gupta moved to Delhi in her early years — a shift that shaped her civic outlook. Her political journey began at Delhi University, where she actively participated in student mobilisation and campus initiatives. In 1996–97, she was elected President of the Delhi University Students' Union, becoming one of the few women to hold the influential post. The

experience strengthened her administrative skills and sharpened her understanding of youth aspirations.

In 2002, she joined the BJP, marking the beginning of a long organisational career. Over two decades, she steadily rose within party ranks and municipal governance. As a councillor in the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, she chaired the Women Welfare and Child Development Committee, focusing on nutrition schemes, education access and community health initiatives. Later, as National Vice President of the BJP Mahila Morcha, she amplified her advocacy for women's safety, entrepreneurship and political participation.

Her defining milestone came in 2025 when she won the Shalimar Bagh Assembly seat and was sworn in as Delhi's fourth woman Chief Minister on February 20.

Completing one year in office recently, the Chief Minister framed her tenure as a shift from rhetoric to results, on delivery and that her government is not a government of promises, but of results. It is not a government of announcements, but of action, she asserts.

Over the years, Gupta's work in social welfare and public service has earned recognition from civic and community organisations. She has been honoured for her efforts in women's empowerment, municipal governance and grassroots development — acknowledgements that reflect her sustained impact at the community level.

Healthcare expansion has been a key achievement. Her Cabinet broadened the reach of Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) in Delhi, extending coverage to nearly 5.5 lakh additional families, including widow pensioners and persons with disabilities.

Women's empowerment initiatives have also featured prominently. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana seeks to enhance women's economic independence and safety, while the Raah Veer Scheme recognises citizens who assist accident victims, promoting civic responsibility and emergency responsiveness.

In education, her government passed the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Act, 2025 aiming to regulate fee structures and ensure accountability.

Infrastructure and civic administration have also seen renewed emphasis. Projects worth Rs264 crore were initiated in Mundka to improve amenities in underserved areas. The CM Jan Sunwai Portal was strengthened to integrate grievance redressal across departments, reinforcing transparency.

Approachable yet firm, Rekha Gupta's leadership blends organisational discipline with accessibility, as reflected in her first-year report card, positioning her tenure as one anchored in accountability, inclusion and measurable progress.

## Young Graceful Leadership, Powerful Impact

A dynamic leader driving academic excellence through innovation and industry integration



**Radhika Agrawal**,  
VP, Corporate Relations, GLA University, G. Noida

### What inspired your career journey?

I've always been drawn to the art of building something from scratch. As a child, I was fascinated by how films and advertisements were conceptualized and brought to life, how an idea could turn into something people connect with emotionally. That curiosity naturally led me to study filmmaking alongside BBA and Media & Communication, because I wanted to understand both creativity and strategy. At the same time, being closely connected to our family's educational legacy made me want to contribute meaningfully. Today, I'm grateful that I can blend storytelling and business to build GLA University, Greater Noida in an authentic, impactful way.

### What is your core role as VP Corporate Relations at GLA University, Greater Noida?

My role goes far beyond a designation. As Vice President of Corporate Relations at GLA University, Greater Noida, I lead marketing and branding while actively building strong industry connections. I believe growth happens through collaboration - meaningful relationships create meaningful opportunities. My work involves positioning the university strategically across platforms,

strengthening corporate networks, and ensuring our communication reflects clarity and credibility. Whether it's digital outreach or in-person engagement, my focus is always on creating long-term value for our students and making sure my work directly contributes to their growth and exposure.

### What changes are needed to better connect education with industry?

The biggest shift needed is moving from information-based learning to application-based learning. Industry should not just be an add-on through placements, it must be integrated into curriculum design, live projects, internships, and mentorship from day one. At GLA University, Greater Noida, we are consciously working toward industry-aligned programs that emphasize real-world exposure, problem-solving, and adaptability. Regular curriculum updates, stronger corporate collaborations, and a focus on soft skills alongside technical expertise are essential. When academia and industry evolve together, students graduate not just qualified, but truly industry-ready and confident.

### What is your long-term vision for the university and its students?

Long-term, I envision GLA University,

Greater Noida as a dynamic ecosystem where academia, industry, and global exposure intersect seamlessly. This means stronger international collaborations, real-time industry labs, startup incubation support, and cross-disciplinary learning. Education should not feel isolated from the real world, it should mirror it. I want our students to graduate with hands-on experience, professional networks, and global perspectives, so they step into the workforce not as freshers seeking direction, but as capable professionals ready to contribute from day one.

### Your message to young women like yourself on this Women's Day?

Honestly, I'm just 24, I don't have all the answers. I wake up some days feeling confident, and other days questioning everything. There are doubts, setbacks, and unexpected opportunities and that's normal. What I've learned is that you don't need to have life figured out; you just need to show up and do your best today. Take risks, trust your instincts, and don't let fear make your decisions. Support other women, collaborate, and grow together. We're all evolving and that's the most powerful part of the journey.



**Harmanpreet Kaur**, Captain, Indian Women's National Cricket Team

## Rise of a Champion

By conquering the world stage, all-rounder Harmanpreet Kaur has united a nation in rooting for sportsmanship beyond gender barriers

The night of November 2, 2025, will go down in the annals of sporting history for reasons beyond sportsmanship. Under the floodlights of the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, captain Harmanpreet Kaur lifted the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup trophy, delivering India its first-ever win.

India's 52-run victory over South Africa was not merely a culmination of a tournament; it was the culmination of a dream that Harmanpreet had chased for more than a decade and a half, standing on the shoulders of many Indian women cricketers before her. It was also a watershed moment when the nation united to look

beyond gender and celebrate a team of sportspersons winning them a world title.

For Harmanpreet, who debuted in the 2009 World Cup as a young, fiery all-rounder, the journey to this pinnacle has been marked by triumph and heartbreak in equal parts. In 2012, the right-handed batter from Punjab's Moga won India the Asia Cup title in the T20 format. Within four years, she became the national team's all-format captain.

Under her captaincy, India snatched its first-ever Test from Australia in 2023, won a Commonwealth Games silver medal in 2022 and Asian Games

gold medal in 2023, and clinched its first T20I series win over England in 2025.

As India's first woman to win an ICC trophy at the senior level, Harmanpreet has not only redefined success on the field but also shifted the landscape off it. She believes the team's success will soon be reflected in stronger central contracts and greater recognition from the Board of Control for Cricket in India. In her eyes, the World Cup victory is not just a title — it is an economic and social turning point, and rightly so.

"Post-November 2, the market value of women's cricket has gone up because of the trophy," she said. "If we had not won that trophy, we would still be stuck there." Her words resonated across a nation now fully awake to the commercial and cultural force of women's sport.

The emotional magnitude of the achievement was etched, quite literally, into her skin as well. Days after the triumph, Harmanpreet unveiled a special tattoo, commemorating the night that changed everything for her and women's cricket in India. It became a symbol of perseverance, pride and the dreams of millions who saw in her victory a reflection of their aspirations.

On the heels of the World Cup high, Harmanpreet stunned onlookers on the runway of Mumbai's Sierra Brand Day. Walking as the showstopper for the HUENN showcase by designer Pranav Kirti Mishra, she fused athletic poise with effortless glamour.

Harmanpreet's story is more than a sporting saga. It is a story that has ignited the fire in countless young girls in towns small and big across India, who are looking up to her and dreaming of charting their own sporting path.

## Grace in Governance, Purpose in Leadership

At the helm of NIFT, Tanu Kashyap champions conscious leadership, institutional reform and purpose-driven public service in modern governance.



**Tanu Kashyap**, DG, National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)

When a student recently asked Tanu Kashyap, Director General (DG) of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), what makes a good bureaucrat, she recalls that her first instinct was to offer the conventional advice: get your degree, clear the entrance examinations, enter the system. Then she paused. The real answer, she reflected, goes far beyond that checklist.

For her, public administration rests not only on competence, but on consciousness — the ability to hold power lightly, to listen before deciding, to act without personal bias and to remain sthir, steady, when situations grow complex. Exams may get you into the system, she often says, but it is inner discipline that helps you stay useful within it. In that distinction lies her larger philosophy: entry into public life may be procedural, but effectiveness within it is deeply personal and ethical.

Her focus at NIFT has been both structural and forward-looking. Industry partnerships are being strengthened to ensure that students remain aligned with evolving market realities. Sustainability is being embedded more firmly into institutional frameworks, reflecting the growing environmental responsibilities of

the fashion and textile sectors.

At a time when India's fashion ecosystem is negotiating technological disruption and global competitiveness, she is working to clarify and reinforce NIFT's role as a thoughtful contributor to the sector's future direction.

An IAS officer of the Punjab cadre, Kashyap brings nearly two decades of administrative experience across diverse sectors — health systems, higher education, rural development, technical training and district governance. Her career has often unfolded in high-pressure contexts. During the pandemic, she oversaw oxygen logistics across more than 450 public health institutions, ensuring continuity in critical care. She has also piloted DBT implementation and worked toward strengthening district-level administrative systems.

At NIFT, the emphasis under her leadership has been on governance transparency, academic rigour, sustainability and deeper industry collaboration.

Her years studying history at JNU shaped her long-term view of institutions. She believes institutions carry both memory and inertia. Reform, therefore, requires patience as much as urgency. Listening, in this process, is not a

gesture of politeness but the starting point of clarity.

Before entering the civil services, she worked with the Pratham Education Foundation, engaging closely with government schools and literacy initiatives while during her training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), she helped initiate Umeed, a volunteer programme supporting underprivileged children — an initiative that continues to function.

In administrative spaces that can easily harden into hierarchy, she chooses calm over command. She listens before deciding and consciously separates the authority of the office from the ego of the individual. Service, for her, is not rhetorical; it is a form of sadhana — a discipline practised daily.

Her message to young professionals, whether aspiring civil servants or designers, remains clear: align ambition with responsibility. Let competence be matched by awareness. Build careers that are not only successful, but useful.

As NIFT steps into its next decade, her stewardship reflects a steady principle — institutions endure when systems are sound, purpose is clear and service remains at the centre.



**Sindhu Gangadharan**, MD, SAP Labs India, and Chairperson, Nasscom

## Shaping India's Digital Future

In India's fast-evolving technology landscape, Sindhu Gangadharan stands at the intersection of innovation, policy and inclusive growth.

As Chairperson of NASSCOM and Managing Director (MD) of SAP Labs India, one of the world's largest enterprise software companies, Sindhu Gangadharan represents a leadership archetype defined by technological depth, strategic foresight and a commitment to diversity in the digital economy.

With more than two decades in the global technology sector, Gangadharan has built her career at SAP. Rising through engineering, product development and leadership roles, she has overseen large-scale innovation hubs and driven next-generation solutions across artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing and enterprise platforms. Under her stewardship, SAP Labs India — one of SAP's largest R&D centres outside Germany — has strengthened its role as a critical innovation engine within the global network.

Her appointment as the first woman Chairperson of NASSCOM marked a milestone for India's technology industry. At a time when digital transformation defines economic competitiveness, she has played a key role in shaping industry dialogue around emerging technologies, digital skilling and global capability centres. Her leadership emphasises collaboration between industry, academia and government to future-proof India's technology talent pipeline.

A strong advocate for responsible innovation, Gangadharan has championed ethical AI frameworks, sustainable digital growth and cybersecurity resilience. She has consistently argued that technology must be both transformative and trustworthy — a philosophy that aligns innovation with accountability. Through

NASSCOM, she has supported initiatives that expand digital access, strengthen startup ecosystems and position India as a global technology powerhouse.

Her influence extends beyond corporate corridors. Gangadharan has been recognised among India's most powerful women in business and technology by leading industry publications. She has received accolades for her contributions to technology leadership and diversity advocacy, including recognition in prominent business rankings celebrating impactful women leaders. These honours reflect her dual impact — driving enterprise growth while expanding opportunities for women in STEM fields.

Within SAP Labs India, she has prioritised inclusive workplace policies, mentorship networks and structured leadership development programmes aimed at increasing women's participation in technology and research roles. She frequently speaks about the importance of visible role models and systemic change in enabling women to thrive in engineering and executive positions.

Her ability to translate complex technological shifts into strategic action has strengthened India's reputation as a trusted global innovation hub.

In an era where digital capability defines national progress, Sindhu Gangadharan embodies a forward-looking model of leadership. She demonstrates that women in technology are not only contributors but architects of transformation. By aligning innovation with inclusion and growth with responsibility, she continues to shape India's digital narrative — proving that the future of technology is strongest when it is diverse, visionary and purpose-driven.

## Enterprise Expression and Equilibrium

Kakali Dutta shares chapters of her journey, weaving a powerful narrative of purpose, passion, and lifelong learning in conversation with Aditi Chakraborty

### Q How did you begin your entrepreneurial journey?

I chose to be a homemaker when my children were young, but I never paused my growth. Those years of managing a home while continuously learning and upskilling shaped my resilience and balance. Eventually, I returned to academia and completed my MBA to equip myself for my next phase of growth.

Around the same time, I co-founded Teamonk with my husband, with the vision of bringing India's finest pure and natural speciality teas to discerning consumers. I did not want to lead only from the boardroom but remained deeply hands-on, building the team, shaping the brand, and contributing to every layer of the venture. What began as entrepreneurship soon became something far more transformative.

### Q Beyond entrepreneurship, how did you carve your path as an author?

Writing evolved organically from my experiences. When we launched Teamonk, I took charge of branding and PR, and blogging became a natural extension of that work. What began as brand storytelling gradually developed into a meaningful writing practice, drawing a growing and engaged readership. During my journey with tea, I became fascinated by the profound truth: a single leaf of *Camellia sinensis* could be processed to become black, oolong, green, or

white tea, resulting in varied wellness benefits.

The more I worked with tea, the more I viewed it not just as a beverage but as a bridge between ritual, nourishment, and well-being. Each cup offered its own health benefits, deepened by blending spices, herbs and flowers such as ashwagandha, cardamom, brahmi, cloves, tulsi, rose petals, and hibiscus. Oolong emerged as the tea for balance, white tea as a low-caffeine night companion, black tea for energised mornings, and green tea, a grassy, restorative brew, enhanced by thoughtful pairings.

My interest shifted from tea as a product to tea as a pathway into healing. This journey culminated in my book, *Life in a Cuppa: Chai Conversations*, where I weave together research, experience, and storytelling.

### Q What inspired you to write a book on wellness rooted in Ayurveda?

My shift toward wellness deepened during COVID, when our physical stores closed and the business moved online. What seemed a disruption to others became my

**"I BELIEVE WOMEN DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE IDENTITY FOR LIFE; WE ARE ALLOWED TO EVOLVE"**



**Kakali Dutta**  
Author, Entrepreneur and  
Wellness Advocate

moment of reflection and redirection. I began exploring how food, daily habits, and mindful living can shape health and quality of life. That phase became my first meaningful step into Ayurveda and the immense wisdom of this 5,000-year-old system of medicine.

Curiosity soon became commitment. After turning fifty, I returned to formal education and completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Ayurvedic food and nutrition—an experience that reaffirmed that learning has no age and reinvention no deadline.

My recent publication, *Dosha Weaves, Healing Threads*, emerges from this journey. Rooted in wellness and Ayurvedic principles, the book reflects a synthesis of the many worlds I have inhabited, science, tea, and holistic living. Through stories, reflections, and practical guidance, I have sought to bring this ancient wisdom to life.

When I look back, I do not see disconnected phases. I see a continuous journey of curiosity! Science led me to tea, tea led me to wellness, and wellness led me to Ayurveda. Every stage of life opened a new door.



Nandita Sinha, CEO, Myntra

## Redefining Fashion-Tech Leadership

Nandita Sinha blends technology, strategy and empathy to shape Myntra into a consumer-first fashion-tech powerhouse driving digital growth.

As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Myntra, Nandita Sinha is not just steering one of India's largest fashion and lifestyle platforms but also redefining what empathetic, consumer-first leadership looks like in the digital economy.

With over a decade of experience in India's largest e-commerce ecosystem, Sinha has played a pivotal role in building and scaling high-impact consumer businesses. Her leadership journey has been marked by a deep understanding of customer behaviour, a sharp strategic lens, and an ability to create strong "customer flywheels" that drive sustained growth. At Myntra, she has focused on strengthening brand partnerships, accelerating technology-led personalisation, and enhancing the

omnichannel fashion experience for millions of users across the country.

An engineer by training, Sinha holds a B.Tech from IIT (BHU) Varanasi and an MBA in Marketing and Strategy from the University of Delhi. This blend of analytical rigour and strategic thinking has shaped her approach to leadership — data-driven yet deeply human-centric.

Before taking the helm at Myntra, she spent years setting up and scaling new businesses within the e-commerce landscape, demonstrating a rare ability to operate both as a builder and a transformer. Her entrepreneurial stint with mybabycart.com, a recommendation-led e-commerce platform for parents, reflects her instinct to identify unmet consumer needs and translate them into scalable digital solutions. That early

experience of building from the ground up continues to inform her leadership style—agile, experimental, and customer-obsessed.

What sets Sinha apart is her commitment to people development. She is widely recognised for mentoring emerging leaders in the consumer internet space and for fostering inclusive, high-performance teams. In an industry often defined by speed and scale, she has consistently emphasised culture, capability building, and long-term value creation.

Under her leadership, Myntra has strengthened its position as a fashion-tech powerhouse, leveraging AI-driven personalisation, creator-led commerce, and a robust brand ecosystem. She has also championed initiatives that amplify women entrepreneurs, homegrown fashion labels, and diverse voices within the platform — aligning business growth with broader social impact.

Sinha's leadership embodies a modern archetype: strategic yet empathetic, tech-forward yet consumer-rooted, ambitious yet purpose-driven. She represents a generation of women leaders who are not only breaking glass ceilings but also redesigning the structures beneath them.

Her journey — from an IIT classroom to the corner office of a fashion-tech giant, from entrepreneur to CEO — serves as an inspiring blueprint for aspiring women professionals navigating India's digital economy. On Women's Day, Nandita Sinha's story is a reminder that leadership is not just about scale and metrics, but about building platforms that empower people, nurture innovation, and create lasting value.

## Pioneering Luxury for Little Ones

Chandni Agarwal's unwavering passion proves that when vision aligns with authenticity, even the smallest wardrobes can make the biggest statement

Chandni Agarwal's story is a powerful reminder that some of the most impactful businesses aren't born in impersonal boardrooms; they spark in the quiet, everyday moments of motherhood. This Women's Day, we celebrate a leader who proved that when a woman's vision is fuelled by authenticity, even the smallest wardrobes can make the loudest statement.

### The Mother of Invention

For Chandni, the defining moment didn't come from a market spreadsheet but from her own nursery. As a mother, she didn't just find a gap in the market; she felt it. She wanted her toddler to wear clothes that reflected the same refinement and quality she enjoyed as an adult. Unable to find well-crafted designer wear for kids in India, she chose to build rather than settle. From that deeply personal need, Little Tags was born. She proved that a mother's intuition is often the most sophisticated form of market research.

### Bringing the World Home

What began as a personal quest has evolved into Little Tags Luxury, a curated universe featuring over 50 internationally admired luxury labels. Today, iconic brands like Dolce & Gabbana, Moschino, Karl Lagerfeld, BOSS, Palm Angels, Elie Saab and Off-



Chandni Agarwal, Founder, Little Tags and Little Tags Luxury

White have a home for India's youngest tastemakers.

But Chandni's vision was never just about looking outward. She remains a fierce advocate for Indian artistry, collaborating with established designers to ensure traditional craftsmanship stands confidently alongside global trends. This love for heritage shines in Alyaansh Couture, her in-house label. These handcrafted ethnic pieces are more than clothes; they are heirlooms, rethinking Indian traditions for the modern child.

### Scaling with Strategic Intent

The journey of growth continues to reach new milestones. The recent launch of Kids Around, Kolkata, introduced an immersive multi-brand format featuring globally admired

"MY OWN SUCCESS STORY AS AN ENTREPRENEUR AND A TRENDSETTER IN FASHION IS A TESTAMENT TO WHAT A WOMAN CAN ACHIEVE WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE"

labels. With a focused approach to licensing and portfolio expansion, the organisation is steadily positioning itself among India's leading names in the luxury kidswear space. Future plans include larger mono-brand stores and a strategic entry into the broader luxury market, all backed by a structured, long-term vision.

### Leading with Grace

On Women's Day, Chandni Agarwal stands as a beacon for a new generation of leaders who lead with empathy and scale with discipline. She didn't enter fashion to chase trends; she entered it to solve a problem for her family and, in turn, for thousands of others.

From a digital boutique to flagships across 8 cities, she nurtured her business with the same care she gave her family. At its heart, Little Tags remains rooted in the emotion that started it all: a mother's love. And that is the most enduring Women's Day story of all: the courage to begin, the resilience to build, and the grace to lead.