

THE WOMAN SPEAKS SERIES



A Report

SUPPORTED BY



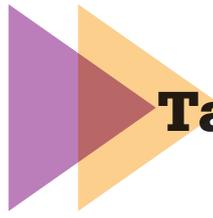


Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Key Takeaways	2
3. List of Speakers	17
4. About the Speakers	19

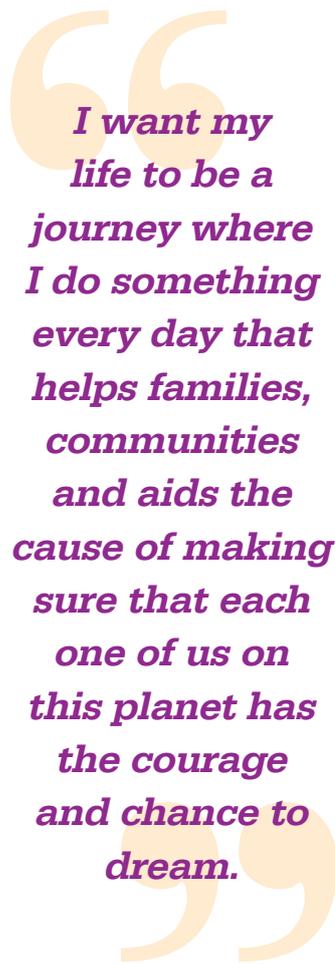




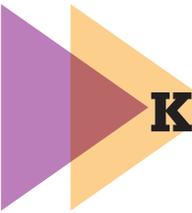
Introduction

The Ananta Centre organized a series of dialogues on “Women and Gender Issues – Highlighting areas of concern to women” – on a platform developed by women, for women and dedicated to women. These dialogues focused on developing strategies for increasing women’s access to opportunities, resources, public spaces, power and control over their lives – at home or at the workplace, and most importantly, their ability to effect change. The series brought to the centre stage, women of substance in various professions, leaders and role models who shared their journeys and experiences.

This report presents key takeaways from each session on how to best empower Indian women, support their ambitions and foster a spirit of leadership among them.



I want my life to be a journey where I do something every day that helps families, communities and aids the cause of making sure that each one of us on this planet has the courage and chance to dream.



Key Takeaways

PART-1

Where is the Glass Ceiling? Indian Women in the Workplace



- ▶ Statistics show that the number of women who are at the helm of affairs in the political sphere, government and corporate jobs across the world remains abysmally low. Notably, only 29 out the 190 Heads of State across the world and just 13 percent of all members of parliament across all countries are women. Amongst top level executives which include the C-suite CEOs and CFOs in corporate jobs across the world, women account for only 15 percent and in the social sector which may appear to be predominantly women-dominated, only 20 percent women head the organisations.
- ▶ Women are often subjected to discrimination owing to stereotypes such as their resistance to technical jobs, lack of aptitude in STEM education and their supposedly non-aggressive

It's important that women who have made it do their bit to mentor and counsel women in the workforce to stick around.

—RESHMA ANAND

behaviour. The over-arching idea that women shy away from conflict combined with other preconceived notions increases the perception that women are ill-equipped to be good leaders.

- ▶ The ill-conceived cultural prejudices originating from stereotypes create lasting gender biases. For instance, women are often seen primarily as home makers and most are not expected to have professional lives and careers. Women are expected to conform to normal hours of work and not encouraged to not stay out late for work due to family commitments or general reasons of safety. Therefore, instead of making it safer or creating a more flexible environment, these reasons are used against her to limit her mobility and discharging her professional duties. A woman's supposed inability to balance home and work efficiently are cited as drawbacks and the reason behind denial of promotions, sidelining at work and stagnating at work.
- ▶ In contrast, men are raised with privileges and the understanding that the world is their oyster and are encouraged to be outgoing. Women on the other hand are taught to be cautious, not dream big and keep their opinions to themselves. In such circumstances, a sense of self-esteem is necessary as without it, women usually underestimate their qualities and attribute their success to luck or other equally random factors. Often this timidity plays a major role in women being unable to negotiate for pay that is equal to their male counterparts or suffering in silence at team meetings.
- ▶ Women are thought to be risk averse and demonstrate a greater fear of failure as compared to men. This can be attributed to the fact that women face greater peer pressure and criticism due to the fact that they are not seen as natural leaders. If she blots her copy book even once, it can derail her career in the long term. This makes them tread cautiously and exhausting all possibilities before taking major decisions. In most cases, they have to work harder than male counterparts to prove their mettle.
- ▶ In some cases, women in the workforce who are in their mid-20s are also looking to get married and raise a family. This makes that phase of life doubly crucial for them as they are in the process of establishing themselves at work and at the same time having to manage family pressures and expectations. They often are forced to or voluntarily step back



There are issues of self-confidence that develop because women are asked to hold back and this manifests in problems like asking for a raise, a promotion and pitching for new business.

—RESHMA ANAND

in order to focus on their families and as a result it becomes difficult for them to get back into the mainstream as they are left with fewer opportunities. Women who have children are often seen as not having adequate commitment to their jobs and therefore not entrusted with challenging opportunities which would require exclusive attention and effort.

- ▶ While the gender distribution at the entry level is fairly equitable, climbing up the hierarchy could prove to be a challenge thereby limiting their chances of breaking the glass ceiling. This can be attributed to company policies, societal and cultural mindsets attached to gender, ultimately leading towards deep rooted biases.
- ▶ In order to create a flexible and equal ecosystem, organisations can employ affirmative action policies where women get preferential treatment and are not discriminated against based on gender. The decisions should be made on merit similar to the system in academia.
- ▶ Women in leadership positions should actively work to dispel these pre-existing notions and create a balanced work environment.
- ▶ Women leaders could mentor and counsel other women in the workforce and help create a support system and cultivate talent.
- ▶ Organisations and institutions should include gender diversity as part of the initiatives. Innovative policies can be framed to encourage such outreach. Funding agencies should also encourage companies who employ women across the board and also give representation to women at decision making levels. It will create a positive ecosystem and bring change over a period of time.
- ▶ Managements need to re-examine their values, analyse the existing structures and how those can be made more women centric.
- ▶ Proactive forums need to be created to express concerns and complaints.
- ▶ Gender sensitization trainings should be incorporated across all sectors including in the government.



What women go through silently and deal with is egregious. Therefore, it is incumbent on all of us women leaders to ensure spaces are made more space.

—SUPARNA SINGH

PART-2

Education and Vocational Skilling for Women:

Challenges and Opportunities



- ▶ Skill, education and healthcare play a crucial role in empowering women and making them financially independent. Sustainability and scalability of these pillars are key to create gender parity in society.
- ▶ Skilling as a vocation not only allows people to preserve their culture and heritage but also helps them connect with their identity at a deeper level. India as a country is not monolithic in nature; every state and geographic region has its own culture and history.
- ▶ While the National Skill Mission has been able to reach most states, the current plans proposed under the mission

An important part of skilling is committing to employability and talking to all the stakeholders.

—MANIKA SHARMA

are generalized for the whole country and do not take into account the traditional skills, the specific environment and the proficiency level of the women in certain regions. In order to create a sustainable model, programmes need to be built keeping in mind the geographic area and its people and must provide access to the market in order to make them financially independent.

- ▶ The government and private sector policies currently do not take skilling into account at the time of hiring and focus on educational credentials. Jobs need to be mapped against skills since a highly educated person may not be a proper fit for the job requiring specialist skills, i.e plumber, electrician, etc. Additionally, there is a stigma attached to skilled manual jobs. For instance, a person would rather get a generic degree than specialize in carpentry as it does not have the same social acceptance and prestige. The mindset of the people needs to be changed.
- ▶ School education has the power to change mindsets which are deeply embedded in the society. It can do so in two ways:
 - By providing gender sensitive training at a young age and emphasizing on equal opportunity and treatment of all genders. Imparting such knowledge to a child can further create a positive influence on the rest of his/her family, thus contributing to a multiplier effect.
 - Including vocational courses and providing experiential learning for students will allow them to graduate with a certificate that proves their employability. The on-the-job training during the course would allow them to interact with potential employers and the employers would also be aware of the potential of the students who are being trained and their capability.
- ▶ Safety of women is an equally big issue as is skilling them. For example, in the healthcare sector, gender inequality is not a major issue. However, safety during night shifts has been a matter of concern. Due to safety concerns, women are hesitant to enter non-traditional employment such as working as a taxi driver or a bus conductor. Often institutions also shy away from hiring women in order to avoid taking responsibility for their safety and security. There is no standard auditing process to ensure whether the women are actually gainfully employed. Placement agencies are engaged to skill women and provide employment. They often traffic



It will take 200 years for the world over, to achieve gender parity. No country in the world has been able to crack this. The sustainability and scalability of the environment has to focus on what it means to be a woman and how to make them feel safe. Therefore, it is essential that we educate children about this right from their formative years.

—DR. SHUBNUM SINGH

women to different states within the country or overseas. This is mostly done illegally as they do not have licenses and hold on to the women's official documents and salary, making them vulnerable to bondage or forced labour.

- ▶ The skilling ecosystem needs to be analysed from the bottom up and it can be a way to change culture, change preventative habits and ensure the right people get into the right stream.
- ▶ Instead of piecemeal interventions, the focus should be on long term skilling and upskilling programmes to create a sustainable and gender equal environment.
- ▶ The stakeholders need to work in tandem as they are currently working in silos and out of sync in order to realise and reap the demographic dividend.
- ▶ Placement agencies need to be sensitised to ensure and promote women into vocational activities apart from the traditional ones.
- ▶ Also, the element of safety needs to be a priority when placements take place outside the home state or country.
- ▶ Strong implementation techniques must be adopted by the government along with proper auditing and accountability systems in place. These steps are necessary to promote skilling and employability in women in traditional and non-traditional activities.



When we talk about skilling, the environment and women's empowerment, we need to have a region-specific approach on how this can allow women to improve their economic status.

—HASINA KARBHARI

When you want to make change happen, there need to be multiple streams that work in tandem and only then will you be able to reach your goal.

—DR. SHUBNUM SINGH

PART-3

Being a Young Woman in India:

Narratives and Perspectives



- ▶ Women should be encouraged to question the set norms in society. These will help change the narrative and allow women to be seen as independent and with their own ambitions and desires.
- ▶ Having a strong role model encourages and gives other women the confidence to follow their dreams and achieve their goals.
- ▶ People with privilege who have access to resources, capital and contacts can change society by creating positive ecosystems and providing opportunities for the less fortunate.
- ▶ People in society have differing viewpoints and it is not possible to change everyone but there is need to have

It takes a lot of introspection, a lot of self-belief, to keep asking yourself, is there a better world out there.

—SHAHEENA ATTARWALA

conversations and dialogues which can at the very least create an understanding and respect for individual choices without it being forced on them.

- ▶ Young girls, especially in rural areas, are conditioned to believe that they are secondary citizens and are often deprived of basic rights and privileges like working towards establishing their careers. They are deprived of information that might help them grow ahead in life. Challenges for women in rural areas are often limited to health and morbidity; however, the problems go beyond those limiting conditions.
- ▶ Lack of self-belief and self-esteem is a pressing problem that serves as an inhibitor for a woman to dream big and aim for bigger goals in a male dominated society. Often, they do not get the necessary support from their family and society and are forced to succumb to depraved societal norms in the name of traditions. Questioning these norms repeatedly can help change the narrative.
- ▶ Lack of opportunities and support to pursue education is one of the toughest challenges for a young woman in India, especially in rural areas. Educating women will not only empower them and make them self-sustainable but will also serve as an effective roadmap towards building a more equitable and inclusive society.



“*Let us not condition children; rather in their formative years, if we teach them to critically question their own actions and those of others, we can definitely set them up for success.*”

—SHAHEENA ATTARWALA



“*At a personal level, it is extremely critical to be mindful and thoughtful of every action we take. It is not a choice anymore.*”

—VASANTHI VELURI

PART-4

Young Women Entrepreneurs:

Their Experience in the Pandemic



- ▶ The pandemic has significantly changed the way we work. One of the major concerns has been whether there will ever be a normal situation as we knew before the pandemic with similar working conditions or there is a need to accept the new normal of work from home, social distancing and masks.
- ▶ Young entrepreneurs are struggling to keep afloat with decreasing revenue, keeping on their staff while at the same time brainstorming for new ideas. On the positive side, necessity is the mother of invention and design thinking. The lockdown and its restrictions have convinced entrepreneurs to re-design their products to suit the current environment.
- ▶ Sectors such as retail and real-estate are physical in nature and consequently the worst hit due to reduced activities. With change in people's priorities and reduced spending on big ticket items, entrepreneurs are revisiting their core values

After much thought, I came to terms with the fact that it doesn't have to be a single Eureka moment, but a set of principles of direction that will help pave the way forward.

—DIPIKA PRASAD

and focusing on building social infrastructure that could bring relief to the underprivileged. For instance, construction companies are working towards creating proper living settlements for migrant workers and *anganwadis* which in turn helps to generate employment.

- ▶ Leaders have had to re-assess goals, and their organisations' strengths and weaknesses during the pandemic. It has provided them time to introspect on how to channelize the organisation's core goals while creating a positive ecosystem for employees and clients.
- ▶ It has also allowed people to connect with their co-workers on human level – with the hope that it would be part of the post-pandemic working culture as well.
- ▶ Prior to the pandemic, if entrepreneurs were widening their goals it meant that they are not focused on what they wanted to achieve. However, in the current situation, it has proved beneficial to look at other challenges that could be solved using their expertise.
- ▶ In times of uncertainty and not knowing what the future looks like, help and support has come from different quarters. A lot of people are offering their services *pro bono* in order to continue working and remaining engaged. However, there are challenges in terms of getting credit from Banks or completing projects when supply chains have been severely disrupted.
- ▶ For women entrepreneurs, the pressures are both internal and external. The major internal struggle comes from the guilt that one is not doing enough. The external pressure comes from investors asking for innovative ways of working and contributing towards solving the current crisis. Investors also need to be reassured that the start-up is innovating solutions to the problems at hand.
- ▶ A key takeaway for the young entrepreneurs has been that in order to survive the hard times it is not about how fast the organisation can grow or be driven by profits. It is important to grow slowly and incrementally with strong values.



The main focus of these brainstorming sessions has been on how to help migrant labour and coming up with innovative ways for children stuck in their homes to learn and play.

—POOJA RAI

PART-5

Young Women in the Non-profit Sector:

Their Experience During the Pandemic



- ▶ In the non-profit sector, work is heavily focused on social interaction and working with people at the grassroots level. The lockdown brought everything to a halt and made it difficult to connect with people.
- ▶ While there have been challenges reaching out to people due to lack of access to phones and technology in general, there have been several positive outcomes for people working in the non-profit sector.
- ▶ Technology can be leveraged to build a base for creating equal opportunities and mobile access for all children can be a potential road towards finding a solution to their education.
- ▶ It has become easier to reach out to government officials who are now available on Zoom calls for meetings.

Everyone has started valuing connections and interactions and just being there for one another. This was something we were struggling to work with but has finally changed for the better.

—AYESHNA KALYAN



What is it that can be leveraged to build something that can create more equitable opportunities for children who do not necessarily have access to it today.

—KHUSHBOO AVASTHI

- ▶ People working in the social sector have always been aware of the problems that plague the less fortunate. However, the pandemic has created an awareness among all the citizens on the challenges and struggles of the people who are less fortunate. People are now able to perceive that there are issues that need to be addressed in a more sustainable way than just reacting to problems.
- ▶ Several Non-Profit Organisations engaged in generous crowd-funding activities based on the assumption that the more people participate and donate for a social cause, there will be more involvement, brainstorming and ideas to use newer ideas to confront old challenges.
- ▶ People are analysing their lifestyles and evaluating options to contribute to the society. These individual steps matter a lot in dealing with the crisis that concerns the society as a whole. Individual initiatives often lead to collective betterment. Work should not be seen only as an avenue of growth and earning money but also if it can help people in current situation and also in dealing with the pandemic.



While people in the social sector were aware of the problems, even the general public could see the challenges that the migrant workers had to face when the pandemic hit.

—RACHITA SINHA

PART-6

Looking at the Future: Building a New Normal



- ▶ The pandemic has forced people to struggle with personal stress and anxiety. At such a juncture, their role as leaders who can solve problems has assumed greater importance because the pre-existing issues of social inequality and access to services to the poor got accentuated.
- ▶ The magnitude of the challenges being faces by the migrant workers who travelled without basic amenities to far off places like Bihar and Jharkhand from industrial states like Karnataka and Maharashtra, was ignored by the authorities and therefore the problem escalated further. There is need to completely revamp our thought process in terms of how we look at the all the rungs of society and the challenges they face.
- ▶ The first priority should be fully eradicating hunger mission. Although mandated by international organisations, it should be the job of the local authorities to implement it in their own areas.

There is no saying when this pandemic will clock out therefore it is important to be prepared for the future as we have no idea how things may turn out.

—ANU AGA

- ▶ The shrinking job market due to the lockdown has raised concerns about providing employment and imparting job skills. A large section of society does not have the privilege of working from home and this section of society requires the attention of the government, industry and civil society.
- ▶ The process of revamping the economy is a long and difficult one but the positive aspects were that schemes like the linking of *Jan Dhan yojana*, Aadhar cards and mobiles allowed people to receive cash transfers in their bank accounts. However, the various leakages in the process need to be addressed by the relevant authorities as the implementation left much to be desired.
- ▶ The pandemic has provided an opportunity to re-imagine, re-design solutions and thinking while focusing on long term solutions instead of knee-jerk reactions at the time of crisis.
- ▶ The rights of citizens need to be viewed through the lens of migrants and people who are below the poverty line. Organisations need to invest in partners that are focused in leading this initiative. This time, we have to go beyond programmatic funding and actually look at how we make core investments in our organisation.
- ▶ Philanthropy in isolation cannot solve the crisis at hand. During the pandemic, keeping the educational institutes up and running was one of the most important tasks at hand. Children and their education and mental well-being cannot afford to be in a state of flux due to the pandemic. Relooking at how schools can function even with distance learning is the need of the hour.
- ▶ Sectors like agriculture and crafts are labour dependent. With the pandemic revolving around us, the food security of India is under threat. Traditional sectors like bangle industry need to be given the helping hand by not only the governments, but also people from all over the country. Those who can afford to give back to the society need to streamline their priorities in the form of both monetary and non-monetary initiatives.
- ▶ Workers had gone home to their native places earlier too, but returning from there was never a problem. This time, it has triggered a crisis of *us and them* syndrome. We need to remove all the obstacles that hinder the positive development



“Half an hour of our school time will be ‘circle time’. It is imperative that we work on the mental health of our students as well as teachers.”

—RADHIKA BHARATRAM

of an egalitarian society. The New Normal is not only about taking steps to reduce the damages the pandemic can do to all our lives; it is also about moving a little further towards establishing a more harmonious society.

- ▶ An egalitarian society can be built through initiatives like a pan India Ration Card scheme, which has been in the pipeline for a long time. Other initiatives like Food for All for people below the poverty line in India, could also cover migrant workers.
- ▶ The journey to a better society begins from individual people. It is about an initiative to do something greater for the cause and not for personal benefit. If we are able to do that as a first step, this can become a stepping stone to responding to the needs of the people. We can then channelise our energy towards working for solutions, and provide synergy to the organisational goals.

*We just discovered
how many blind spots
we had, based on
assumptions that we
made on issues like
social security*

—RESHMA ANAND



List of Speakers & Moderators

PART 1: What Glass Ceiling? : Indian Women in the Workplace

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms Reshma Anand**, *CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation*
- » **Ms Pratibha Jain**, *Partner, Nishith Desai Associates*
- » **Ms Suparna Singh**, *CEO, NDTV Group*

MODERATOR

- » **Mr Amitav Virmani**, *Founder CEO, The Education Alliance*

PART 2: Education and Vocational skilling for Women: Challenges and Opportunities

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms Hasina Kharbhih**, *Founder Managing Director (MD) Impulse Social Enterprises Pvt. Ltd and Ananta Aspen Centre Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow*
- » **Ms Manika Sharma**, *Director, The Shri Ram Schools*
- » **Dr Shubnum Singh**, *Chairperson, Health Sector Skills Council and Founder member, Life Sciences Sector Skills Development Council*

MODERATOR

- » **Mr Aditya Natraj**, *Founder and Director of Kaivalya Education Foundation (KEF) and Ananta Aspen Centre Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow*

PART 3: Being a Young Woman in India: Narratives and Perspectives

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms Shaheena Attarwala**, *UX Design leader, Lawyer and Social Activist, Bangalore and Ananta Aspen GP Birla Fellow*
- » **Ms Shriti Pandey**, *Founder & Director, Strawcture Eco, Gorakhpur and Ananta Aspen GP Birla Fellow*
- » **Ms Ashweetha Shetty**, *Founder, Bodhi Tree Foundation, Tirunelveli and Ananta Aspen GP Birla Fellow*
- » **Ms Vasanthi Veluri**, *Co-Founder, Peoli, Almora and Ananta Aspen GP Birla Fellow*

MODERATOR

- » **Mr Amitav Virmani**, *Founder CEO, The Education Alliance and Ananta Aspen Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow*

PART 4: Young Women Entrepreneurs and Their Experience in the Pandemic

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms Shriti Pandey**, *Founder, Stawcture Eco*
- » **Ms Dipika Prasad**, *Co-Founder, PortalFrame*
- » **Ms Pooja Rai**, *Co-Founder and CEO, Anthill Creations*

MODERATOR

- » **Ms Reshma Anand**, *CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation and Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow, Ananta Aspen Centre*

PART 5: Young Women in the Non-Profit Sector and their Experience during the Pandemic

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms. Ayesha Kalyan**, *Co-Founder and Director, Varitra Foundation, Karnal*
- » **Ms. Khushboo Avasthi**, *Co-Founder, Mantra4Change and COO, ShikshaLokam*
- » **Ms. Rachita Sinha**, *Co-Founder, Youth Conservation Action Network (YouCAN)*

MODERATOR

- » **Ms. Reshma Anand**, *CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation and Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow, Ananta Aspen Centre*

PART 6: Looking at the Future- Building a New Normal

SPEAKERS

- » **Ms. Anu Aga**, *Former Chairperson, Thermax Limited*
- » **Ms. Reshma Anand**, *CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation and Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow, Ananta Aspen Centre*
- » **Ms. Radhika Bharatram**, *Joint Vice Chairperson, The Shri Ram Schools*

MODERATOR

- » **Mr Amitav Virmani**, *Founder CEO, The Education Alliance and Ananta Aspen Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow*



About the Speakers



Ms Reshma Anand

CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation

Reshma is a business school graduate with over 20 years of leadership experience in mission driven non-profits and social ventures. She started out with a conventional corporate career at Unilever in India in roles including market intelligence, product innovation and brand management. As work took her to rural outposts across India, Reshma decided to shift gears to work on development challenges through market-based solutions. She is the

founder of two social ventures including a specialist advisory firm on sustainable social responsibility and an accelerator for agri and artisanal micro entrepreneurs. She is an Economics graduate from the University of Delhi, an MBA from IIM-Bangalore, a Fellow of second wave class of Ananta Aspen's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship and a TED India Fellow. In her current role, Reshma heads Hindustan Unilever Foundation; a corporate foundation focused on water conservation and community governance. She has a bag packed at all times to take a road trip!



Ms. Anu Aga

Former Chairperson, Thermax Limited

Anu Aga began her industry career in Thermax in 1985. In '91, she took charge of the company's Human Resources function. In 1996 after her husband Rohinton Aga passed away, the Board appointed her as the Executive Chairperson of the Thermax Group and two years later she continued as Non-Executive Chairperson. She retired as Chairperson in October 2004. As Chairperson, Ms. Aga anchored the turnaround of Thermax through four

major initiatives: reconstitution of the board, shedding of non-core activities, rightsizing of operations and increased focus on the customer. She is also instrumental in driving a high performance culture. Recently she retired as the Director on the Board of Thermax and also from chairing the Thermax Foundation. Mrs. Aga now spends more time for social causes and travelling. Her area of interest is improving the quality of school education for the economically underprivileged. She is keenly involved with Akanksha and Teach for India and is a member on their boards.



Ms Shaheena Attarwala

UX Design leader, Lawyer and Social Activist, Bangalore

Shaheena is currently the Director of UX at Zoomcar, India's largest self-drive care rental. Hailing from the village of Khaga in Uttar Pradesh, she was raised in the slums of Mumbai. Shaheena resisted an early marriage and pursued education fearlessly to design a different life for herself. Her journey has inspired more girls in her slum to walk a similar path. Shaheena's social initiatives in the space of sanitation have been acclaimed by the United

Nations. She believes that people from vulnerable backgrounds should mainstream themselves through education, else an egalitarian society will stay a dream.



Ms. Khushboo Avasthi

Co-Founder, Mantra4Change and COO, ShikshaLokam

Hailing from a conservative Brahmin family in a small city in Bihar, Khushboo's life is a living testimony for how choices define a life and how serendipity is not a misnomer. A management professional turned education enthusiast, Khushboo is the Co-founder of Mantra4Change, a Bengaluru based non-profit that drives and leads the narrative of systemic transformation in the education system. On a mission to enable quality learning experiences

for children by developing public schools into a self-healing system, Khushboo and her team are currently working with multiple state governments on large scale educational change programs. She has 10+ years of diverse experience across product innovations, project management, program design, community engagement and technology in the domain of healthcare and education. A believer of systems and platform thinking, Khushboo currently also serves as the COO of ShikshaLokam - a national open education leadership platform by Shibulal Family Philanthropic Foundation. A travel enthusiast, a curious lifelong learner and an avid reader, her current interests lie in exploring concepts of agency, networks, large scale social movements and societal role of technology in encouraging co-creation and collaboration.



Ms. Radhika Bharatram

Joint Vice Chairperson, The Shri Ram Schools

Radhika Bharat Ram, Joint Vice Chairperson of The Shri Ram Schools seamlessly straddles championing different domains in the field of education, crafts and social service wherein she strives to make an impact on people's lives. A passionate educationist, she has been instrumental in setting up The Shri Ram Millennium Schools and The Shri Ram Early Years. She is on the board of SRF Foundation, which predominantly works

in the area of rural education. A staunch supporter to the cause of inclusion, she serves as the Joint Secretary of The Blind Relief Association, New Delhi and Chairperson, The Indian Blind Sports Association. She believes in working at the grassroot and essays the role of a culture revivalist in the

true spirit as the Secretary of Delhi Crafts Council to support the cause of handloom weavers and artisans. An advocate and supporter, she is the trustee of CAPED –Cancer Awareness, Prevention and Early Detection that has been working in the area of awareness creation for women cervical cancer. Since 2014 she has been a jury member of CII Foundation Women Exemplar Program, which recognises women who are transforming rural India. A break from work is well spent indulging in her passion for music and running half marathons. She has been part of 5 NGO fundraisers productions as one of their lead singers.



Ms Pratibha Jain

Partner, Nishith Desai Associates

Ms. Pratibha Jain is the Founding Partner and also the Head of the Delhi office of Nishith Desai Associates. She heads the Funds and Regulatory practice at NDA. Ms. Jain brings with her a breadth of international and Indian experience having worked in New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Mumbai. Ms. Jain's educational qualifications include B.A (Economics) Hons. and LL.B. degree from Delhi University, a Bachelor of Civil Law degree

from the University of Oxford, and a LL.M. degree from the Harvard Law School. Her areas of focus include FDI investments, banking and finance and corporate and regulatory advisory. She is a Fellow of the Shaken Not Stirred Class of Ananta Aspen's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship and member of Aspen Global Leadership Network.



Ms Ayeshna Kalyan

Co-Founder and Director, Varitra Foundation, Karnal

Ayeshna Kalyan co-founded Varitra Foundation in Jan 2018 to help rural government schools add value to their system and transform change in the way students perceive public education in rural India. In less than 3 years, over 20 schools have benefited from their "Whole School Transformation" model and an active community of 52 rural youth (constituting 97% women) has been built through their youth leadership

program in Karnal district (Haryana). Last year, Ayeshna began leading a women livelihood initiative called "Ksuti" to empower rural women towards social & economic independence through skill training & enterprising and built a group of more than 60 women in less than 9 months. Currently, Ayeshna is a Wipro & Edumentum Fellow and has recently been named as a co-founding member at Indian Women Social Entrepreneurs Network (IWSEN). A Graduate in Mass Media from St. Xavier's College (Mumbai) and a Post-Graduate in Communication for Development from Xavier Institute of Communication (Mumbai), Ayeshna has always been an enthusiast in Human Interest Storytelling and engaging with communities.



Ms Hasina Kharbhih

Founder Managing Director (MD) Impulse Social Enterprises Pvt. Ltd

Hasina is the Founder Chair of Board Impulse NGO Network (INGON) - a 26-year-old social organization working on the issue of human trafficking in Northeast India, North Bengal, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Ms. Kharbhih created the internationally acknowledged Impulse Model - a holistic method to address human trafficking. The Model brings together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors to combat human trafficking and bolster each others' efforts through collective leadership. Hasina lives in Shillong, Meghalaya, in the Northeast of India. She is a Fellow of Class 3 of the Ananta Aspen's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.



Mr Aditya Natraj

Founder and Director of Kaivalya Education Foundation (KEF)

Aditya is the founder and director of Kaivalya Education Foundation (KEF) - an institution specialized in leadership development programmes for nation building. The Principal Leadership Development Programme helps principals turn-around failing schools and improve student outcomes. The 3 year part-time programme currently works with 1300 principals of government schools in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The Gandhi Fellowship is a 2 year full-time programme to train young people in leading social change. Previously Aditya was Director of Pratham in Gujarat for 5 years, Vice-President of Business Development at ProXchange for 2 years and a Consultant at KPMG for 5 years. Aditya is a qualified Chartered Accountant, a Masters in Economics and has an MBA from INSEAD. Aditya is an Ashoka Fellow and an Echoing Green Fellow. He is a Fellow of the Class 5 of the Ananta Aspen Centre's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship and a member of Aspen Global Leadership Network.



Ms Shriti Pandey

Founder & Director, Strawcture Eco, Gorakhpur

Shriti, from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, is a Civil Engineer with a degree in construction management. She gave up her job as a cost consultant in USA to work for the State Bank of India, as a rural Fellow. Her desire to create a world that consumes less and creates more, led her to set up STRAWcture in 2018. STRAWcture builds houses using panels made of agri-residue and light gauge steel framing. It aims to contribute to sustainable housing in India and make such living spaces more accessible.



Ms Dipika Prasad

Co-Founder, PortalFrame

Dipika is Co-Founder & CEO of PortalFrame, a location intelligence startup that helps businesses and non-profits make more data-driven decisions. Prior to this she also ran a civic-tech non-profit called Lakeer that built open-source urban planning technologies for India. She has spent the past decade working on inclusive development issues across South Asia and East Africa. She has advised and supported organizations such as the World Bank, IFC,

the Rockefeller Foundation, Bosch, Unilever, GIZ, and the Shell Foundation. Before starting up, she worked at the Aavishkaar-Intellect Group where she led the Intellect Innovation Lab - an initiative focused on using exponential technologies to drive social change. She also built and scaled India's first and largest virtual incubation platform called "StartupWave". The platform was recognized by the World Economic Forum and Harvard Kennedy School as one of 12 breakthrough ideas shaping the future of global inclusive development. She's served as an advisor to the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Entrepreneurship & to Confederation of Indian Industries Indian Women Network. Dipika is an Ananta Aspen Centre G.P. Birla Fellow (class of 2019).



Ms Pooja Rai

Co-Founder and CEO, Anthill Creations

Pooja Rai is the co-founder and CEO of Anthill Creations, a social enterprise incubated by NSRCEL IIM Bangalore and N/Core. It aims to make play accessible to all by building low cost and sustainable playscapes in urban areas. Anthill Creations brings in the much-needed play into children's lives that eventually affects their overall physical emotional and social development for a better growth and life. She is an architecture graduate

from IIT Kharagpur. She has also authored a book on women entrepreneurs named 'The Road Not Taken' published by IIM Bangalore.



Ms Manika Sharma

Director, The Shri Ram Schools

Ms. Sharma has been associated with the organization for over 30 years now. A dedicated educator, with an unwavering belief in meaningful education that nurtures lifelong learners, Manika has a passion for inclusion and diversity. Post her graduation, she went on to complete her Master's in Education. She currently is trained in both National and international curriculum and has been training and empowering others in this space over

the last few decades. She has shaped the values and philosophy of the school and played a key role in formulating its vision & policies. Under her leadership, TSRS has been the number 1 school in the country and boasts of great academic and extracurricular results.



Ms Ashweetha Shetty

Founder, Bodhi Tree Foundation, Tirunelveli

Ashweetha, who hails from Perumalpuram in Tamil Nadu, dreams of a nation where there is no rural urban divide based on opportunities, skills, human knowledge and resources. She started Bodhi Tree Foundation in 2014, a Tirunelveli-based nonprofit that supports and mentors rural college graduates so that they can access better career opportunities and live their true potential. Ashweetha is also a Young India Fellow, an Acumen India

Fellow, an Ashoka Youth Venturer, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.



Ms. Rachita Sinha

Co-Founder, Youth Conservation Action Network (YouCAN)

Rachita focuses her time and energy to empower youth to improve eco-literacy in their communities. Through the Earth Ambassadors Fellowship, a one-year programme that she conceived with her team, Rachita has been supporting youth to become environmental educators. Through this, she fulfills her passion in nature and education, and how these two can bridge the gender gap, organically. YouCAN has completed two cohorts of the one-

year, pan India fellowship by collaborating with various community partners at the convergence of nature, education, leadership, and mental health. She has previously been a Facilitator, Curriculum Designer and Mentor (for young people) working in education and research at Infosys, Mysuru training centre for a stint of four years. Rachita was born in Ranchi, Jharkhand. She grew up in a quaint little suburb called Chasnalla, (district Dhanbad) in the coal belt of India.



Dr Shubnum Singh

Chairperson, Health Sector Skills Council and Founder member, Life Sciences Sector Skills Development Council

Dr. Shubnum is an alumnus of Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi and has 38 years of experience in the medical profession ranging from Clinician, Administrator to Health care Policy Framework and Strategy. A founder member of Max Healthcare Institute Ltd, she has been actively involved in strategizing and developing different verticals of the delivery system. As CEO

of Max Institute of Health Education & Research, she was actively engaged in developing a sustainable model of education and skilling for the group. She has served as a founding Director of the Healthcare Management Program at the Indian School of Business. She is currently Chairperson of the Healthcare Sector Skill Council and founder member of the Life Sciences Sector Skills Development Council. A pivotal member of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) National Healthcare Council for the last 15 years she has spearheaded, and led numerous interventions that impact the growth of the healthcare sector at large. As a Clinical Allergist her vision is to grow the discipline & build research capabilities.



Ms Suparna Singh

CEO, NDTV Group

Suparna has been with NDTV for 25 years and has the highest-level experience in all aspects of NDTV functions: editorial in both broadcast TV and internet, revenue and cost management. She has helped NDTV create and run a major new property in NDTV Convergence, which is internationally recognised. It is and has always been a profitable venture (almost unheard of among similar internet news properties). She likes coffee and Golden

Retrievers. She is a Fellow of the 4Sight Class of Ananta Aspen's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship and a member of Aspen Global Leadership Network.



Ms Vasanthi Veluri

Co-Founder, Peoli, Almora

Vasanthi Veluri, from Ahmedabad, is a co-founder of Peoli, a brand built on the ethos of sustainable living through sourcing organic raw materials, honouring indigenous skills and creating livelihood for women in rural region of Himalayas, northern India. Vasanthi has a graduate degree in Textile design from the National Institute of Design. She aims to nurture the hands and the hearts of people while providing a fair

means of livelihood through her work.



Mr Amitav Virmani

Founder CEO, The Education Alliance

Amitav is founder CEO, The Education Alliance (TEA), a registered non-profit organisation based in India that facilitates Public Private Partnerships in Education across the country. He is actively involved, in the capacity of Trustee/Director, with various philanthropic organisations involving education, spirituality and children. He sits on the board of Central Square Foundation, AVPN India, Children's Book Trust, CAPED, Kama Holdings and

several other companies. Amitav is a member of the CII-Northern Region Education Task Force and also a member of the International Board of Advisors for Kenan Flagler Business School, UNC, Chapel Hill. In 2010, he was selected as an Aspen Fellow and joined the 3rd generation class of Ananta Aspen's Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship. In 2015, he was elected as an Ashoka Fellow and in 2017 he was selected as an N/Core Fellow for their inaugural class.



124, Janpath, First Floor, New Delhi - 110001 (India)
Tel. +91-11-4327 9000 | Fax. +91-11-4327 9090
admin@anantacentre.in | www.anantaaspencentre.in