

# ECC NEWS

Employee Communication Journal of L&T Construction

## Winspiring Change!



# Barriers are in the mind. So are solutions.

*Dear Colleague,*

The fact that today we have a woman Executive Vice President, a couple of Vice Presidents - Finance, a Corporate Centre Head, a Project Director, Project Managers, and several function heads in our ranks is a remarkable testimony that we are leading and 'Winspiring' change. That young women are today demanding postings at project sites marks a radical change in thinking, acceptance and how our sites have transformed to be more woman-friendly. At L&T, we have always believed in and promoted equal opportunities for all and meritocracy with no discrimination on any count by creating an enabling environment for each one of you to succeed and excel. That is why we are such a great place to work.

The elevation of women to positions of importance and their success in our construction industry, for long considered a male bastion, reflects the dramatic strides we have taken to embrace

equity. Presently, women constitute only 7.6% of our employee strength but that is a legacy issue, and it will only be a matter of time before this anomaly is rectified.

### **Break barriers! Create opportunities to fly**

This issue of *ECC News* celebrates some of our successful women leaders who are representative of the many successful women we have the pleasure of working alongside at L&T Construction. All of them have overcome the barriers of mindsets and lack of opportunities to find their places in the sun. The stories featured here capture their determination, courage, strength of conviction and capability to take challenges in their stride, to rise to every occasion and deliver. They have succeeded because they believe that barriers are only in the mind. The good news is that so are the solutions.

“ *Our women colleagues are breaking stereotypes and discovering that in a world driven by 'performance, performance, performance,' there are opportunities for anyone with the right skill set and attitude to rise to the top – regardless of gender.* ”

“ *Opportunities are knocking and every woman employee can seize the day and make a mark. Nothing is going to stop you now; the world is yours for the making.* ”

The new liberated outlook, progressive approach, and accommodative work mindset of the modern world have hastened change, and at the same time, thrown up more opportunities for women which they have grabbed with both hands. Our women colleagues are breaking stereotypes and discovering that in a world driven by 'performance, performance, performance,' there are opportunities for anyone with the right skill set and attitude to rise to the top – regardless of gender. There is empirical evidence that the participation of women at work, and more particularly in our context, at project sites, has translated into significant improvements in efficiency levels across fronts which is also perhaps the best way to change mindsets and sink preconceived notions.

There were times when working women were few, opportunities even fewer, and growth difficult. Today, however, with the Company foraying into new geographies and fresh areas of business, opportunities have multiplied and so have women success stories. We are committed to creating and sustaining the right environment for women to make their presence felt in both

engineering and non-engineering roles and make terms like 'gender biases' and 'glass ceilings' irrelevant in our context. Through our DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) initiatives to Induct, Develop, Engage and Enable and other programmes, we are progressively introducing best practices to give our women the license to fly. Inherently good multi-taskers, juggling home and work daily, all their working lives, women have honed their skills to handle multiple deliverables and process various project requirements simultaneously.

Opportunities are knocking and every woman employee can seize the day and make a mark. Nothing is going to stop you now; the world is yours for the making and time should not be too far away when we have a woman Board Member from amongst our employees. Surely, the sky is the limit.

All the best!

**S N Subrahmanyam**  
CEO & Managing Director, L&T



# SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

## Koneru Bhavani

Executive Vice President & Head – Urban Transit SBG, Heavy Civil Infra IC



*My mandate is really challenging because L&T's association with the Metro business began in the early 1990s with three packages of the Delhi Metro. I have enjoyed a ringside view of the growth and development of the metro rail systems in India.*



She is L&T's first woman Executive Vice President, a tall achievement for K Bhavani and a much-deserved one too.

A Civil Engineering graduate from Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh, an Incorporated Engineer (UK) and a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Bhavani has worked across various departments during her 3-decade-long stint with L&T that she describes as "fantastic," including design, construction methods, supply chain, and business. Presently, heading the Urban Transit SBG, she manages business cumulatively worth upwards of

INR 50,000 Crores. "My mandate is really challenging because L&T's association with the Metro business began in the early 1990s with three packages of the Delhi Metro." Name an Indian city and there are high chances that L&T would either have completed or is presently executing a metro project there. Now, having spread its presence to geographies like the Middle East and Bangladesh, Bhavani does have a lot to manage. "In fact, I have enjoyed a ringside view of the growth and development of the metro rail systems in India," she points out.



*Delhi Metro Project was my first, in a JV with a German Company. My learning curve was extremely steep, and I was most impressed by how detailed the Germans were. I understood the importance and fully appreciate SNS's insistence to get into details. Certainly, God is in the details.*



*Today, in L&T, we have women at key positions such as project directors and managers. We women must take the initiative to succeed.*



form of "several roles starting with design, supply chain and I completed the project as a part of the business unit. It was like a complete journey of the project."

Bhavani is one of the standard-bearers for inducting women into construction, for when she began, there were very few in the industry with even fewer opportunities. "Even in college, we were just 7 of us and all except me are now in the US, having switched careers," she highlights, alluding to some of the barriers and the stereotypical view of the construction profession as some of the impediments. Things have changed, mindsets have evolved, and opportunities have opened. "Personally, I have not come across any organisation that differentiates between men and women and am certain that with a bit of encouragement and support from all sides we will have more women in construction," she remarks confidently. "Today, in L&T, we have women in key positions such as project directors and managers. We women must take the initiative to succeed," she emphasizes. Using her example, she encourages women to take on more challenging roles through the 'Own Your Life' initiative in the STEM sector and another to bring on board more ladies as Front-Line Supervisors.

Attributing her success to her mentors, seniors, colleagues, team members and family, she says, "Without their encouragement and support I don't think I would have reached where I am today. The credit goes to them for helping me to stretch my limits and achieve whatever I have, always encouraging me that I can do it."

Though involved with several marquee projects, there are some closer to her heart than others. "If I had to pick one, it would be the Delhi Metro Project, which was my first, in a JV with a German Company. My learning curve was extremely steep, and I was most impressed by how detailed the Germans were. I understood the importance and fully appreciate SNS's insistence to get into details. Certainly, God is in the details," she reiterates.

The Jammu-Udhampur rail link project holds special relevance for Bhavani too. "We executed a bridge just 300m long but the kind of work we did was very challenging from an engineering and construction point of view. I learnt a lot from my association with the late Dr Subba Rao, a legend in civil engineering." Her association with the iconic Hyderabad Metro Project was in the



Engineering runs deep in Bhavani's family. Her husband, Satish, is a Mechanical Engineer retired from Voltas and they are blessed with two sons. Elder son, Chaitra, is an Electronics & Communication Engineer, working with Freshworks as an Outbound Product Manager while the younger son, Nitish, is presently pursuing his graduation in Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras.

# PUSHING BOUNDARIES TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE

**C Niranjana**

Vice President & Head – Finance, Accounts & Admin, PT&D IC



“Life is all about pushing boundaries, finding a sensible balance and working towards it. I enjoy a lot of freedom to operate, to take decisions at every level that gives me a feeling of empowerment and ownership.”

“There could be many unconscious biases or assumptions that women may not take up certain challenges or roles but once you perform and deliver results, those mental blocks or biases disappear.”

After over three wonderful decades with L&T, this lady who is so adept at dealing with figures is confident that she has figured out how to balance her professional and personal lives. “Life is all about pushing boundaries,” says C Niranjana, “finding a sensible balance and working towards it.” After joining the Company as its first woman Chartered Accountant, her interesting and enriching journey punctuated with many varied experiences have toughened her into the hardened professional she is today, ready to take on the world.

“The journey over the years has taken me to various places literally and given me the opportunity to meet different people, that has taught me many valuable lessons,” she remarks. “I’ve travelled to both domestic and international project locations, from the southernmost tip to the northernmost part of India, through her forests, to the deserts of Saudi, the mountains of Bhutan and Nepal and more and met a wide array of people including senior bureaucrats, clients, bankers, Government authorities, and vendors.”

This worldview has accelerated her growth in the organization that began in 1992 with Systems Development followed by brief stints in international operations and HQ Accounts Consolidation before taking a sabbatical with an alternate flexi career to raise her kids. After her return in 2001 to L&T DPBU where she was part of the team in the financial restructuring of high-cost debts of SPVs, Niranjana then moved to the Chennai Region as Regional Accounts and Administration Head in 2006, which had the best managed working capital during her tenure. After the formation of the ICs, she



took over as Deputy F&A Head of Infrastructure IC (Heavy Civil and TI IC combined). “In 2013 I became F&A Head, WET IC and since 2016 have been heading F&A of PT&D IC,” she shares, tracing her career path. Actively involved in strategic business decision making including risk management and providing decision support for new bids, partnerships & tie-ups and new initiatives, Niranjana is responsible for the Board Secretariat of the PT&D IC Board.

An aspect about L&T that she never tires of sharing is its caring and supportive character that is ingrained into the organization’s culture, despite being a highly professional one, that, she adds, is not even present in large, family-owned corporates. “I enjoy a lot of freedom to operate, to take decisions at every level that gives me a feeling of empowerment and ownership.”

About making it big in a man’s world, Niranjana is frank and forthright. “There could be many unconscious biases or assumptions that women may not take up certain challenges or roles but once you perform and deliver results, those mental blocks or biases disappear,” she smiles. “As an organization we have come a long way and I don’t believe that there is any active or open gender bias though there could be subtle conscious and unconscious ones that need to be removed. On the other hand, we women too have a responsibility to break some of these self-imposed barriers,” she says forcefully. “Gender diversity can only increase by recruiting more women across levels, but,” she cautions, “equity and inclusion are important to retain them, and they should be given opportunities to perform and grow. We may have to tweak some of our policies and the way we operate, but in the long run it will help us to have a diverse talent pool,” she rounds off rousingly.

On her home front, Niranjana is married to Viswanthan, who is CEO of a German MNC in Medical Equipments. Son, Dhanvin, has completed his Masters in the US and works for Apple there while daughter, Dharika, is completing her Masters in International Studies and will be pursuing her PhD in Zurich. Lifting a veil on her personal life, she shares, “I begin my day with my morning walk or gymming or some exercise routine. I like listening to music, both classical and movie songs, and I like driving, so a long drive listening to music is something I love. Reading has taken a back seat in the last decade. I go on recommendations and enjoyed the book on Indira Nooyi’s life, which was gifted by our Winspire team. These days I listen more to podcasts. I also like to cook and some of my dishes and sweets are a hit with my family members,” she laughs.

“Life is like running a marathon, we need to enjoy it and even if we are unable to complete it, there is always a next. What matters is our own performance, always doing better than the previous one.”

On a closing note, she says, “One of my favourite quotes is that life is a marathon and not a sprint; we always tend to think of success and winning in life and career and compare our journey with that of others. But Life is like running a marathon, we need to enjoy it and even if we are unable to complete it, there is always a next. What matters is our own performance, always doing better than the previous one.”

A Director on the Board of five L&T subsidiaries, Niranjana has a lot on her plate and what thrills her about being a part of this wonderful organization is the opportunity to touch people’s lives daily and contribute to the growth and development of the nation. We wish this proud L&T-ite, the very best!



# SINKING ROOTS TO BLOSSOM IN AN ORGANIZATION OF OPPORTUNITIES

**Vaishali Prasad Koparkar**  
Vice President & Head – Finance,  
Accounts & Admin, TI IC



*The top management took a chance on me by entrusting me with several challenging assignments and I am happy that I got the opportunity to deliver.* ”

Joining L&T as a lateral recruit in March 2006, Vaishali Koparkar has had several opportunities to show her true worth and seventeen years later, she is delighted that she took that call. The organization, happier having gained an asset. “The top management took a chance on me by entrusting me with several challenging assignments,” she remarks, “and I am happy that I got the opportunity to deliver.”

Beginning with Corporate Accounts, Vaishali had the fortune to work closely with the top leadership from the start and to be involved with some major exercises like transitioning L&T’s financial reporting to Ind AS based on International Standards. “Apart from the sheer delight of applying knowledge, I understood L&T’s diverse

businesses better and that gave me immense job satisfaction. It was a great example of teamwork,” she describes the experience. That helped hone her skills of patience, effective communication, external and internal networking, leading from the front, and relentlessly exploring solutions. “I even got to present at many external forums like RBI, SEBI, ICAI, ASB,” she beams.

While during her association with the K9 Vajra project for Defence IC as Head of Finance & Accounts, she played an important role enabling strategic and financial decisions including structuring arrangements with major vendors and customer interactions, Vaishali’s 11-month stint with TI IC has been a “happening” one. “The sheer scale and diversity are challenging but you also have the chance to make a positive impact,” she says resolutely, “like analysing business situations and performance, providing lead indicators, working with the business and site teams, and customers for claims realization.” The day-to-day challenges are immense too and tackling them with quick decisions and empowering teams keeps her ticking.

As a finance professional, Vaishali is well-placed to add value in diverse industries and sectors. “L&T was my best option, to join a professionally managed company, known for its size and complexity, and presence across multiple sectors.” Though there were not too many women aspiring for long corporate careers when she began hers, Vaishali was determined to make her mark. “Male domination never bothered me,” she shakes her head, “but initially there are always a few challenges when you join as a lateral in a senior position in any organization,” she laughs. “You are expected to show results from day one since you have come with rich experience from another organization.”



*The new generation is very clear about their goals, aspirations, expectations from the company and are more open-minded. They seek flexible timing but are ready to put in the long hours though this seems to be more the thinking of the new generation and not specifically of women.* ”



*I have faced many deadlocks and some of my proposals have been dismissed outright but the good part is that if you have a valid point, a good solution and can explain it well, it will almost always be accepted. Your conviction, confidence, and patience will be put to the test but once they are convinced that you have a point, you get complete freedom to pursue your initiatives.* ”

With her cumulatively three and a half decades of experience, Vaishali has seen and experienced a lot. “Times are changing with more women entering the corporate world in fields like Project Management, Execution, Design, Finance & Accounts, HR, Quality, Environment and more. The new generation is very clear about their goals, aspirations, and expectations from the company and is more open-minded,” she observes. “They seek flexible timing but are ready to put in the long hours though this seems to be more the thinking of the new generation and not specifically of women,” she clarifies. Secure with a company that embraces the principles of equality and diversity, Vaishali is confident that programmes like WINSPIRE will gain roots to nurture women’s talent and build a leadership pipeline. “Of course, a lot depends upon the woman employees themselves; their work must demonstrate their contribution, initiative, determination, prove their credentials and win trust by making the best of the opportunities.” She mentions that women encounter barriers in the initial period of their careers when they are getting settled in life and taking up family responsibilities. “Unbiased support during this phase will go a long way to retain women’s talent.”

Working closely with the senior leadership helped Vaishali develop macro and micro perspectives, appreciate how strategic decisions are taken and apply domain expertise to take decisions and provide solutions. “I have faced many deadlocks and some of my proposals have been dismissed outright,” she says grimly, “but the good part is that if you have a valid point, a good solution and can explain it well, it will almost always be accepted. But you must go through the grind. Your conviction, confidence, and patience will be put to the test but once they are convinced that you have a point, you get complete freedom to pursue your initiatives.” Vaishali agrees that she has learnt a lot from peers in different businesses and functions by exchanging ideas. “In my role as a strategic enabler and controller, close interactions with peers have been very important in my journey,” she points out, acknowledging that her teams across ICs and Corporate have been competent, ready to take initiatives, hardworking and sincere. “My team has always been my strength throughout,” she affirms.

Vaishali’s pursuit of excellence has been driven by her parents who have been her huge sources of inspiration. “My mother was a schoolteacher and my father an accountant with Premier Automobiles. They gave us three sisters a value-based middle class upbringing, good education, great values, and the freedom to pursue our careers.” Husband, Prasad, is also a Chartered Accountant with an illustrious career of over 3 decades, retired as a Senior Director & Head of Crisil’s Research Business. “He is my partner in a true sense: he understands me, inspires me, stands by me and above all, he respects my career.” Son, Advait, has done his Master’s in Electrical & Computer Engineering and is working with Qualcomm in California, US. “My in-laws have endured my crazy work schedules and have been pillars of strength in my journey,” she adds meaningfully.



Signing off, Vaishali shares a memorable personal achievement. “I acquired another professional degree almost 12-13 years after I qualified as CA and became Chartered Management Accountant from CIMA-London UK, standing 2<sup>nd</sup> in Financial Reporting internationally at the final level. This gave me a great sense of achievement, as I accomplished it while working and shouldering responsibilities on both fronts.”



# AN ARCHITECT BY PROFESSION, A CREATIVE AT HEART

**Anila Manoharan**

General Manager & Head – Dams & Bridges, L&T GeoStructure



*As an architect, joining India's construction giant was a dream come true! Knowing the iconic and trailblazing landmarks that L&T had built, I was certain that there would be ample opportunities for an architect in this great organization.*



construction of the synthetic turf hockey stadium in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, in a record 69 days," excitedly sharing one of her early triumphs. She then flags off her key role in designing a sophisticated state-of-the-art flight kitchen, a food factory, for an airline in Chennai. Later, as part of the Mavens team within EDRC, she focused on strategic initiatives, budgeting & monitoring financial performance, standardization, and documentation.

"In 2012, joining a niche entity, L&T GeoStructure (LTGS), right from its inception, was an opportunity of a lifetime," Anila fondly reminisces, where she was presented with a wide canvas to script the growth of the business and plan its future. "My specific contribution was to increase its profitability with a lean and robust supply chain." Although the late Mr. S Kanappan ran a tight ship, focused on building expertise in the ground engineering segment, LTGS offered people like Anila enormous opportunities to grow, which she did, to subsequently take on the role of a business head.



What architects find most exhilarating is to see their designs come to life and Anila Manoharan has been enjoying such highs for over 2 decades with L&T. "Even today, when I cross structures that I've had the privilege of being a part of, my children feel a sense of pride and it gives me great joy," she shares with unconcealed happiness. A Graduate Architect Trainee from the batch of 1993, Anila began her association with L&T with the Architecture team with dreams unlimited. "As an architect, joining India's construction giant was a dream come true! Knowing the iconic and trailblazing landmarks that L&T had built, I was certain that there would be ample opportunities for an architect in this great organization." The next couple of decades proved Anila right.

To start with, she got to work on various building typologies, like designing townships for the Hirni and Tadipatri cement plants. "A few years down the line, I was instrumental in the design and



*I love playing the piano, the pipe organ and singing, I lead a choir of about 40 and we perform thrice every year. In fact, some of my most memorable moments are making music together as a family, since all four of us play instruments and sing too!*

"Today as a business leader, I am in the niche area of constructing very large diameter piles for bridges, deep diaphragm walls, plastic concrete cut-off walls for dams, stone columns and other ground improvement techniques," mentioning what she presently does for a living. "Each project is unique with its own challenges, and successfully overcoming them is the greatest satisfaction," she smiles tightly, obviously recalling some tough hurdles she has had to overcome to deliver, which is not surprising considering that her objective is to "always focus on business growth and profitability." Which has far greater relevance for an entity like LTGS.

Surely the dams and bridges she designs reflect her creativity. Another realm where it finds full expression is in her passion for western classical, pop, and choral music. "I love playing the piano, the pipe organ and singing, I lead a choir of about 40 and we perform thrice every year. In fact, some of my most memorable moments are making music together as a family, since all four of us play instruments and sing too!" After the famous Von Trapp family from 'The Sound of Music', meet the 'Musical Manoharans' that comprise Anila's husband, Swithun, a President at TAFE, elder daughter, Aria, an industrial engineer working at Stellantis and younger daughter, Keturah, who has just completed her 10<sup>th</sup> standard.

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Anila has struck the right notes to find her space in a male-dominated industry. "When I joined, there were less than ten ladies in the entire Manapakkam campus which was a bit overwhelming initially, but it drew us closer, eating lunch together, sharing our thoughts and forming friendships that are going strong to this day," she exclaims. In today's fast-paced world, in which women



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are required to wear many hats and fulfil demanding roles both at office and at home, family support, she feels, is imperative to succeed. "Building gender diversity is a corporate decision and at L&T, the leadership direction in this area is very clear," she remarks, "supported by the HR team with women-friendly policies, L&T is well on its way to being a benchmark in this area."

Equally amazing has been Anila's journey with L&T. "I enjoy freedom to work, learn, perform and achieve and, of course, create fantastic memories along the way!"

# ANSWERING HER TRUE CALLING

## Alpana Shripad Khale

General Manager & Head – Finance, Accounts & Admin, B&F IC

“Although challenging, project business yet exposes an accounts professional to various aspects apart from accounting. The dynamic environment demands one to be aligned with ever-evolving requirements that forces you to be both an agile decision maker and a calculated risk taker which stimulates me tremendously.”



“No achievement is possible without team support, and I have been lucky to have extremely efficient and co-operative team members.”

The opportunity to visit various hydel projects as a young girl filled Alpana Khale with a sense of awe by the gamut of activities there, little knowing that she would later be part of an organization that builds structures that are even bigger in size and scale. Joining L&T's Hydrocarbon business was in a sense answering her true calling and today, on the threshold of completing two and half decades with the Company, she looks back in satisfaction at the several milestones accomplished and looks forward confident that the best is yet to come.

“Although challenging, project business exposes an accounts professional to various aspects apart from accounting,” she points out, “offering a rich flavour of costing, treasury, taxation, RBI compliances for international projects, import-export regulatory requirements, and much more. The dynamic environment demands one to be aligned with ever-evolving requirements that force you to be both an agile decision maker and a calculated risk taker which stimulates me tremendously.”

After joining the erstwhile Group II Projects (now Hydrocarbon IC) in Costing in 1996, Alpana has over the years handled various portfolios including financial accounting, management reporting, project monitoring, foreign project compliances, and treasury, among others. Flagging off a couple of personal triumphs, she shares, “I led the re-implementation of SAP across the various verticals of Hydrocarbon and its S&A companies as F&A SME and developed a costing system for the Yards for the first time.” As CFO of L&T Sapura Shipping Pvt Ltd, a JV of Hydrocarbon, Alpana

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had to handle an extremely challenging Malaysian JV partner and was extensively involved in the demerger of Hydrocarbon into a separate legal entity including resolving various post demerger issues. “As Company Secretary for L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering Limited, I handled all aspects of statutory compliances and the Companies Act and even had the opportunity to interact with the Independent Directors,” she smiles. Now, as Head of B&F's FAA, she has just taken guard to play a fresh innings.

Perhaps, being a gender agnostic function, Alpana has not faced too many challenges except being the only woman at development programmes in her early years. “In my view, the entire environment has evolved over the years and is far more supporting of women who want to tread the path,” she observes. “Site facilities have improved multi-fold and need-based movement of women employees across locations is now possible.” She feels that retaining women becomes challenging when they are in the family way, which if supported, may go a long way to improve retention. “By the way, I was part of a core committee formed under the guidance of the CHR Head in 2019 – 2020 by SNS, for suggestions to improve gender diversity in L&T.”

Alpana is convinced that a satisfying and fulfilling career awaits women who want to make a mark in the construction industry. “Of course, with L&T, they have the privilege of contributing to nation-building too,” she adds, proud of L&T's culture of caring

and nurturing young talent. Her advice is to, “Believe in yourself, wear confidence on your sleeve for women possess the unique ability to plan, execute and tide over any challenge. Never feel weak, suppressed, or victimised; be self-motivated and persevere,” she urges.

Alpana attributes her success to her ability to plan, set deliverable targets, give space to perform, encourage people to contribute and support them in moments of crisis. “No achievement is possible without team support, and I have been lucky to have extremely efficient and co-operative team members. I am equally grateful to my seniors for helping me understand project business accounting, develop teams, and learn the art of delegation,” she says, ear-marking Mr. K Venkataramanan, former CEO & MD, L&T for special praise. “He inspired me and was my mentor in my formative years in L&T.”

“In my view, the entire environment has evolved over the years and is far more supporting of women who want to tread the path.”

Her first inspiration, however, comes from home and Alpana recognizes that both her parents have inspired her enormously. “Being the youngest in a joint family, a culture supportive of growth aspirations helped each one of us to pursue our dreams and my family has been hugely supportive of my decisions, always standing by me, including my decision to relocate to Chennai from Mumbai.” She is especially proud of her brother's achievements, an ENT surgeon, and one of the few to successfully conduct surgery on black fungus, a fallout of COVID infections. She mentions another family member's role in developing her personality, “who besides being a successful professional with impressive writing skills, was a great homemaker, an excellent parent and managed both roles easily and expertly.”

“My most memorable moment was seeing the pride in my father's eyes, when I secured the 1<sup>st</sup> rank among women candidates and overall stood 18<sup>th</sup> all-India in my Final CWA,” she smiles brightly at the memory. To unwind, Alpana loves to read, drive, travel, listen to classical music and Marathi and Hindi film songs of yesteryears.





# A BASTION-BASHER, CARVING A NICHE FOR HERSELF

**Chetana Patnaik**  
Head – HR & CSR, TI IC

The journey from the small town of Berhampur in Odisha to working with the two top leaders of India's largest conglomerate has been exhilarating, challenging, unnerving, and hugely satisfying for Chetana Patnaik. "My tryst with L&T began in July 2012 in Group Chairman, Mr. A M Naik's office, as Head - Strategic Leadership Talent Acquisition, to build the senior leadership team and feed L&T Group's talent pipeline, including to the Executive Board of the listed entities," she shares about her assignment that lasted eight and a half years, of which for the last three years she reported to SNS, responsible for succession planning at leadership levels among several other responsibilities. "Currently I lead TI IC's HR and CSR functions under SVD's leadership." Different bosses, different leadership styles, different approaches but Chetana has held her own very well. "Let me tell you, I have learnt a lot, unlearnt a lot, got invaluable insights into people and processes. It has been like going to management school all over again," she grins.

A couple of her initial barriers when she started her professional career were assertiveness and the fear of being discriminated against, hailing from a small town. Realizing a problem is half solving it; Chetana worked to overcome these perceived shortcomings for 16 years before joining L&T where she was straight away thrown into the deep end. "I still remember there were some 63 active positions, each one more critical and challenging than the other." Some of her key successful assignments included CEO & MD – Mindtree, CEO & MDs for LTI, Hydrocarbon, L&T HMRL & L&T Shipbuilding; COOs for LTI, LTTs, & Mindtree; CFOs for LTI, Mindtree, & LTTs, Company Secretary – L&T Corporate, Head of Corporate Strategy, Group Head of M&A & Divestment and many more. "It has been a great learning, and I feel blessed for the opportunity to work with visionaries like AMN and SNS," she says, mentioning L&T's institutionalized 7-step Leadership Development Process, that she facilitated and managed at the Chairman and CEO & MD Offices.

*It has been a great learning, and I feel blessed for the opportunity to work with visionaries like AMN and SNS.*



*The Group Values resonate with me, the challenges and the opportunities, the confidence the higherups place in you and, most importantly, the professional freedom and empowerment you enjoy.*

Throughout her career, Chetana has found herself in industries like logistics, power & infrastructure, construction, that have traditionally been considered male bastions. "You can call me a bastion basher," she says with a nonchalant shrug. "I believe that the barriers for women are all in the mind and so are the solutions," she points out insightfully. "We need to change our mindsets before setting about changing that of others," she notes, echoing Gandhiji's famous quote, "You must be the change you seek around you."

"I am incredibly proud of my team today and everywhere I have worked throughout my career, for all my accomplishments are the result of collective teamwork," she says with gratitude. "I firmly believe that with a motivated team, success is within reach. Without the support of my colleagues, team members, and seniors, it would not have been possible for me to walk this path thus far."

She seeks no quarter nor is willing to give any. "We must be willing to put in the long yards and not expect timings, targets, tasks to be relaxed for us." She agrees that the tough construction industry has relatively less female participation, but "that means there is so much more opportunity to grow and succeed. In short, go for it, ladies, the world is yours," she exhorts. "Both my mother and mother-in-law have been great sources of inspiration, epitomes of strength, grace, patience and a high level of empathy and compassion, always urging me to believe in myself and that the opportunities would be limitless and unstoppable. I truly believe in that," she emphasizes seriously.



Chetana hails from what she terms an "Educationist" family. "My father is a retired Professor in Physics, my uncles were professors too and my childhood was focused on studies, embracing the right values." After completing her graduation with distinction in Mathematics Honours and Economics, she completed her MBA from Berhampur University and came to Mumbai with a head full of dreams and eyes full of stars. "My husband, Satyajit, is a Business Director and Country Head with a US-based MNC, responsible for their South Asia business and my teenaged son, Chirantan, is studying hard, dreaming to become a Neurosurgeon," she shares, adding that holding him for first time has been her most precious moment. "That feeling of fulfilment is difficult to express," she says dreamily. Chetana finds cooking for friends and family cathartic and it helps her unwind.

*You can call me a bastion basher. I believe that the barriers for women are all in the mind and so are the solutions. We need to change our mindsets before setting about changing that of others.*

Returning to her success at L&T, she remarks, "The Group Values resonate with me, the challenges and the opportunities, the confidence the higher-ups place in you and, most importantly, the professional freedom and empowerment you enjoy," citing the opportunity to organize an event to honour AMN on being conferred the Padma Vibhushan. "It was far from HR, more about communications and entirely new to me, but I enjoyed the experience."

The Mindtree acquisition in 2019 was a tough assignment that kept her awake for several nights. "Immediately post the acquisition, we faced a bit of an exodus and had to quickly close ranks, build and strengthen the new entity not just in India but primarily overseas in the US, UK, and other places," she shares. "I was independently managing the transition, working closely with SNS to build the blocks." Another critical assignment Chetana was passionately involved with was the LTI-Mindtree merger last year where she was called up on to design the org structure, evolve the compensation package along with the ESOP scheme, and introduce various HR policies, etc. "SNS's acknowledgment that concluding the process in just over 6 months was one of the fastest in the mergers arena is indeed very high praise," she shares emotionally.

"In essence, I like pushing the envelope and re-sketching the boundaries that convention and past practice have drawn," she concludes, and we wish her the very best to continue doing so!



*Both my mother and mother-in-law have been great sources of inspiration, epitomes of strength, grace, patience and a high level of empathy and compassion.*





# DESIGNING HER DESTINY

**Balasaraswathi Ilango**  
JGM & Head – EDRC (Factories), B&F IC

modestly. “Seen as a breakthrough in the construction segment, today, this novel manufacturing concept is replacing traditional building practices and is being used extensively in our other factory projects too.” Totally involved in the entire project cycle, she adds that they even exceeded client expectations and received an excellent appreciation. Savouring that success, she attributes it to an openness in understanding the client, a positive attitude, and inspiring the team to complete the job, of course, with the guidance from seniors & mentors. “The same attributes drive me even today, though my role has changed,” she says with a nod.

Earlier in Factories jobs, BIM implementation was not a mandate but as a digital evangelist, she formed a team specialised in BIM modules and other frontier digital technologies to ensure wider deployment.

The ultimate joy for a designer is to see his or her design brought to life and what impresses her about L&T is, “An overall exposure and the opportunity to witness and experience what I have designed which is the real feeling of accomplishment. Taking up challenging and innovative projects afresh is our way of life,” says Balasaraswathi, who has been blessed with several opportunities to prove her mettle across a wide range of projects including ITC, Ford, ONGC, JRS, Reliance, Grasim, OLA, Maruti – the list is impressive with more in the pipeline. “My mantra for success: *If not we, who else? If not now, when? If not here, where?*”



“In my opinion, generally, this is an easy phase for women especially for those in the early stages of their career,” she smiles when quizzed about the role of women in a hitherto male bastion of construction. “Gender diversity is improving thanks to my women colleagues who are strong, determined and eager to take up new, innovative and challenging roles and become role models for each other.” The vibrant younger women are thirsting for quick success and she believes that some breakthroughs can be expected

“*I was able to bring in my expertise in pre-engineered metal buildings, which was then a relatively new area. Seen as a breakthrough in the construction segment, today, this novel manufacturing concept is replacing traditional building practices and is being used extensively in our other factory projects too.*”

Just two months after her marriage, Balasaraswathi Ilango was sent on an overseas deputation followed by another when her son was merely two. “While I thank and credit my husband for what I am today, I still feel that these two ventures gave me immense satisfaction,” she smiles but beneath her smile you can sense the steely determination that has driven her growth, first with a couple of multinational design consultancy firms and thereafter since joining L&T. “I am happy to be completing a decade with this great organization, and am presently heading the design division of B&F’s Factories BU with end-to-end responsibility for all D&B jobs, client networking, capability building in new sectors and technologies, and supporting project sites.” Quite a handful but she seems to be adeptly handling them all.

For most, their first assignments are memorable, and it is so for Balasaraswathi too, L&T’s first D&B job in the food sector, an integrated food manufacturing facility at Kapurthala for ITC. “I was able to bring in my expertise in pre-engineered metal buildings here which was then a relatively new area,” she shrugs

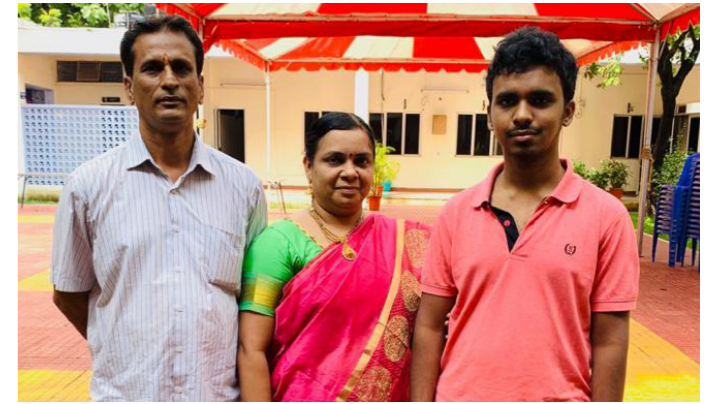
soon. About shifting priorities of women post marriage, she shrugs that one needs to accept it as reality and learn to live with it. “An environment of Equity with Equality will go a long way to enhance diversity,” she says thoughtfully, “with women enjoying equal responsibility,” citing a young PGET specifically seeking a site posting and B&F’s all-women project team.

“Challenges will always be there,” she laughs, waving her hand as if swatting them away, “and there will always be people who either support and encourage or criticize you either on the personal or the official side. It is up to us how we handle them and move forward positively. Self-responsibility and ownership always give power to handle any situation and succeed and I strongly believe that the people around us are pillars of support. Trust them and take their support as and when needed.” Her sense of reality is note-worthy. “During hard times, I recall the rejuvenating words of wisdom of my mentors and reassure myself that I will pass through this and move ahead.”

Such inner strength can only come from a strong upbringing, and it is no surprise that both her parents are school-teachers. “My mother wanted me always to be a self-dependent and confident

“*An environment of Equity with Equality will go a long way to enhance diversity with women enjoying equal responsibility.*”

“*Self-responsibility and ownership always give power to handle any situation and succeed and I strongly believe that the people around us are the pillars of support.*”



individual, never considering me second to anyone when it came to performance and achievement and I think I have lived up to her expectations,” she laughs. Hailing from Bommidi village in Tamil Nadu’s Dharmapuri district, certainly, a small-town girl has gone places! Education runs in the family, for her husband, Ilango R., is a Professor with a Doctorate in Chemistry. “Our son, Hemnath, is doing his M.S in General Surgery, in a government medical college in Tamil Nadu,” she shares with pride. Her elder brother is an Alumnus of IIT, Madras and currently the Director – CVRDE/ HVF (DRDO).

“In all, I am happy and proud to be an L&T-ite,” she says, with unconcealed delight.



# MAKING A MARK OUTSIDE OF HER COMFORT ZONE

## Jyotsna Gautam

Joint General Manager, WET IC

She has the distinction of being L&T Construction's first woman Project Director, truly a trailblazer and an inspiration for more women to take up more positions of relevance in the organization. For Jyotsna Gautam, the recognition has been hard-fought and as she grows in the ranks, the process is getting easier, even if responsibilities are multiplying. A PGET from the 1999 batch, Jyotsna had no inhibitions about entering a male-dominated space. "I was always interested in Civil Engineering and later in Project Management that was stronger than my hesitancy to enter the construction industry," she grins. Yes, she concedes there were some initial apprehensions about living up to expectations, meeting requirements, and closing the gap between theory and practical work. "My passion, dedication and sincerity towards my work have always helped me wade through difficult waters," she remarks confidently.

Starting off in the Contracts and Tendering Department at the Chennai HQ, "I immediately had the opportunity to work under leaders like SNS, SVD, V. Ramesh, T.S Kowsalya among others," she says brightly. "What I found most impressive and mesmerizing about them was their passion for work, commitment, visualization,



determination, and imagination with continuous innovations. I learnt a lot under them." This foundation was solid enough to successfully launch her career.

WET IC bagged several prestigious projects like the SAUNI Yojana, the NC packages, some wastewater and smart water infra projects like Dholera during her watch as Head - Business Development for Gujarat, Rajasthan, and MP from 2012 to 2016. "I aspired to lead

*I immediately had the opportunity to work under leaders like SNS, SVD, V. Ramesh, T.S Kowsalya among others. What I found most impressive and mesmerizing about them was their passion for work, commitment, visualization, determination, and imagination with continuous innovations. I learnt a lot under them.*



*“ Move out of your comfort zone as I have, be affirmative and resolved to overcome all challenges to grow professionally, master your respective trades and learn to conquer your fears. If you are able to achieve these, leadership is yours for the taking. ”*

a mega project and thanks to the management, I was given the responsibility to lead India's first and largest smart city project at Dholera," she shares proudly, adding with a smile, "which is also our Prime Minister's dream project." After delivering the project, Jyotsna continues to describe her growth trajectory by taking on the role of Task Force Leader for all ongoing smart city projects like the ones at Rajkot, Silvassa, Faridabad. From November 2022, she has become Segment Head, leading the North & West Segments of WET IC's Urban Water & Water Management business.

For a person who has tasted quick and sustained success, Jyotsna is still vocal about why women have not taken sufficiently long strides in the construction industry. "Preconceived beliefs and biases, lack

Jyotsna is appreciative of L&T's 'People First' approach that she believes is giving the Company a cutting edge in today's cutthroat environment to retain talent and surpass targets. "My entire ecosystem of seniors, peers, team members and subordinates have been the pillars of strength during my career journey," she remarks, her sense of gratitude evident. "We ensure communication with each other, remain accessible, offer praise, recognize challenges, and provide learning opportunities. L&T is like a family and an organization offering lots of opportunities to learn, grow and develop sub-ordinates."

*“ My passion, dedication and sincerity towards my work have always helped me wade through difficult waters. ”*

of mentorship, minimal opportunities to take up leading roles, no participation in policy decisions are some of the barriers that have prevented women from finding significant representation in the top echelons of the organization," she vents out. "Women, however, are catching up but there are very few opportunities to get to the top level and therefore to increase gender diversity, we must inculcate a spirit of trust and grooming," she stresses. "The participation and incorporation of women based on talent and potential in positions of power will certainly help enormously."

Her message for women trying to make a mark is straightforward and unequivocal. "Move out of your comfort zone as I have, be affirmative and resolved to overcome all challenges to grow professionally, master your respective trades and learn to conquer your fears. If you are able to achieve these, leadership is yours for the taking," she shares rousingly.



On her home front, Jyotsna and her husband, Praveen, who holds a senior position in TCS, are blessed with two kids. "My son, Aditya, is pursuing his second year in IT Engineering, and daughter, Anushka, is in tenth grade," she shares with typical motherly love, adding that giving birth to her daughter was her life's most cherished moment.

Professionally, her interactions with seniors have been both edifying and satisfying and in conclusion she lifts a veil to the secret of her success. "Be calm and composed, master your skills, continuously add value and always aim for perfection."

# SHINING BRIGHT LIKE A DIAMOND!

**Judy Vinodhini M Ravikumar**  
Chief Architect – EDRC, B&F IC

Like a diamond, she was discovered in a moment of pure serendipity. Back in 2001, as an enthusiastic Graduate Architect Trainee, Judy Vinodhini M Ravikumar was working on her first architectural mockup for the Gem & Jewelry Park, Kolkata. "Some of my seniors chanced to see my drawings and they were so impressed that we decided to pitch and won the design mandate," she recalls fondly. Today, the Gem & Jewelry Park enjoys a special place in her journey with L&T that she joined 21 years ago, the diamond shaped building catching and reflecting the sparkle of her talent. "I was called in every time we had to present the design and it became a sort of my calling card," she laughs.

It is always thrilling for designers to see how their creative strokes on paper translate into reality. That is Judy's heady feeling when she visits Serene County, a 1,040-home township in Hyderabad for which she was the Lead Architect. "I still get goosebumps and an incredible sense of fulfilment," she says, "to see every element as I had designed it: the tall terracotta-colored buildings, the club house, the play areas, the swimming pool and everything else." A commercial success, the project won L&T many accolades and was recognized as Andhra Pradesh's best concrete residential project.

If the Gem & Jewelry Park design gave wings to her career as an architect, her selection for the IIM-A MEP programme in 2009 introduced a business orientation to her growth. "At first, it seemed daunting for me for I had no intentions of getting into the business side of things," she muses, but made of stern stuff, she put her mind to it and came through the 2-year programme with flying colours. More triumphs awaited her: she became a Certified IGBC AP, ISO 9001 2015 Lead Auditor, a GRIHA trainer, and an Evaluator, PMP. Apart from being on the jury for various L&T corporate programmes and national-level architectural competitions, she is an external examiner for B. Arch and a panelist at various conferences.

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*I always knew in my heart that I would design buildings, but nothing prepared me for the kind of opportunities I got to hone my construction knowledge to design buildings that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, sustainable and, most importantly, loved by those residing in them.*

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"I always knew in my heart that I would design buildings," she recalls with a faraway look, "but nothing prepared me for the kind of opportunities I got to hone my construction knowledge to design buildings that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, sustainable and, most importantly, loved by those residing in them." As the buildings she designed grew, so did Judy's career, becoming Head of the architecture team for Residential Buildings and Factories division till 2016, where she handled projects of more than 6 million sq. ft., extensively using technologies like tunnel formwork construction, shear wall construction and precast. The C17 Hindan airbase was another milestone project in her career.

Not one to follow the herd, Judy was ever keen to walk the untreaded path and veered to Business Development, an area normally alien to architects. The new role opened opportunities for her and soon she was presenting her design and business proposals to prospective clients, bureaucrats, government leaders,

even to the Chief Minister and Governor of Andhra Pradesh and bagging several large projects in the process. That she had to travel extensively deterred her not one bit. She whole-heartedly acknowledges the support and guidance of her seniors in her success. "Sometimes it was just their presence in the background during important meetings, just to assure me that they had my back."



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*Define your aspirations first and then go for them. There is no same scale to measure success; it is certainly much simpler than childbirth.*



A core committee member of ECC Recreation Club since 2008, she expertly balances work, play and home. A native of Chennai, Judy is married to K R Ravikumar, a Senior Vice President with DLF and the apple of their eye, daughter Neharika Rhea, is pursuing her UG in Psychology. "Without my family's support and encouragement, I could not have achieved much," she remarks seriously.

Her message to young women harbouring aspirations to become a part of the construction industry: "Define your aspirations first and then go for them. There is no same scale to measure success; it is certainly much simpler than childbirth."

From the diamond-shaped building, Judy has come a long way. "I never consciously tried for anything in my career, everything just happened," she laughs, and presently she is participating in building the nation's future as Architectural Lead for the High-Speed Rail Stations and Depot, Railway Station Projects, and Public Buildings. "This is the future, and I am part of it," she says with a dimpled smile, hard to miss her spectacular shine.

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*I firmly hold that our mindset and inner conservative self are our biggest barriers and in today's era, when the social barriers have greatly relaxed and women have equal opportunities to education, use of technology, communication, employment, and so on, there can be no reason to hold back a woman from her purpose.*



## SHATTERING AN IMAGINARY GLASS CEILING TO DEFINE A NEW GROWTH TRAJECTORY

**Rashmi Choudhury**

Head – Finance, Accounts & Admin, M&M SBG

For a person who has never considered gender as a roadblock to growth and success, Rashmi Choudhury had the opportunity to shatter an imaginary glass ceiling early in her career. “I volunteered for a secondment to a small country in Africa where no woman from my organisation ventured earlier,” she shares from memory. “Even though the opportunity did not materialise due to logistics and safety concerns, it opened the door to a plethora of opportunities for me that strengthened my resolve to succeed so I had no apprehensions to enter the construction industry,” she says confidently. “In fact, if I rewind my career, I do not recall any significant barrier that stood in my way that impacted my performance, learning or growth compared to my male contemporaries.”

In a career spanning a little less than three decades, Rashmi has spent the last one with L&T, joining in March 2013 as DGM – Finance in the erstwhile MMH IC. Some of her initial assignments included, inter alia, leading the financial accounts, cost accounts and reporting. Soon, her portfolio was enhanced to include overseeing PMS/MIS, internal control, budgeting, special initiatives and more. Holding her in good stead were her abilities to adapt quickly to any environment and people, seize control of tasks & situations and develop the right strategies & coping mechanisms to overcome stumbling blocks.

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*If you have fire in the belly, belief in yourself, the perseverance and passion to be part of nation building, then this is the place to be. If we cannot die for the nation, we can at least build it.*”

During the formative years of her career working with one of the ‘Big 4’ audit firms, Rashmi handled assignments across diverse industries: from manufacturing (tea, jute, cables, paints, FMCG) to construction, upstream Oil & Gas, telecom, to several service industries. “These exposed me to a variety of people, gave me the chance to travel to remote places and even work in factory or site setups where there would hardly be any women folk,” she remarks, dismissing some oft-held biases. “I firmly hold that our mindset and inner conservative self are our biggest barriers and in today's era, when the social barriers have greatly relaxed and women have equal opportunities to education, use of technology,

communication, employment, and so on, there can be no reason to hold back a woman from her purpose. By removing the gender cap at work, wearing a smile that gives a positive vibe, shouldering equal responsibility, demonstrating ownership, and adopting a collaborative approach towards organisational purpose, there is no reason why women cannot assume important positions in any walk of life.”

Rashmi's message to all the young women out there: “If you have fire in the belly, belief in yourself, the perseverance and passion to be part of nation building, then this is the place to be. If we cannot die for the nation, we can at least build it. I am sure when you see yourself at a job site with the helmet and look at the projects created by you and your team, you will make yourself and your family proud.”

Such strong values are rooted in a strong upbringing, and she smilingly mentions that behind every successful woman are two men. “My dad, Mr. S K Choudhury, has been my first inspiration. A self-made person, an entrepreneur without any formal education in management or entrepreneurship, yet he applied the best principles of management in leading a joint family and a business venture. A man of principles who upheld traditions and culture with a blend of modernity, he instilled in me Passion for Purpose, and to hold Purpose above Self.” Husband, Pinaki, a chartered accountant by profession, is the ‘Mr Perfectionist’, who has set high benchmarks for Rashmi, that has turned out to be a blessing in disguise, helping her to evolve into a better, more organised and balanced individual. “We met post the merger of the two global firms we were employed with and some of our Alumni still amuse us stating that our union symbolises the true merger of PwC,” she laughs. “My mother, a homemaker, and an epitome of patience is my ‘go-to person’ when the going gets tough while my mother-in-law continues to be my biggest support system, helping me juggle between my work and family responsibilities.”

While Pinaki is still a Partner with PwC, Rashmi's elder daughter, Saloni, has completed her ISC and is planning to pursue a career in Architecture with special interest in design, has Level 4 certification in communication skills from Trinity College, London, and plays the guitar. “My younger one, Sohani, is in Class IX, an abacus grand master, a budding creative writer, having written short stories published by scholastics, a certified game developer and a piano



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*We connect people and lives. During the pandemic when the world had gone virtual, we L&T-ites remained connected and supported each other unconditionally. That's the best part of L&T!*

learner,” she shares with evident motherly affection. “During my free time, I engage in fitness activities walking and swimming, enjoy cooking, am interested in the science of astrology and do shake a leg at times when the mood is just right,” she says with a ladylike bat of her eyelids.

“I see value in every human being and there has been an enormous amount of learning and support from my seniors, peers, team members and subordinates in both favorable and adverse situations that have made me a more mature and strong professional,” she observes in conclusion. About L&T, she says brightly, “We connect people and lives. During the pandemic when the world had gone virtual, we L&T-ites remained connected and supported each other unconditionally. That's the best part of L&T!”



# TAKING LEAPS OF FAITH TO SUCCEED AND GROW

## Uma Srinivasan

Head – Talent Management, Heavy Civil Infra IC

Her life has been punctuated by several leaps of faith and the good news for Uma Srinivasan is that those have been quantum leaps propelling her career forward. From a humble beginning, and soon realizing that merit is the only route to success, she set about building her future. Armed with an engineering degree in Metallurgy, from Malaviya National Institute of Technology (erstwhile MREC), Jaipur, her campus job with a British metal trading firm lasted only six months before she took a leap of faith to join a leading software company in the Sales & Marketing function. With her flair to connect with people and ability to influence, she grew rapidly to handle the APAC region for the company. Fast-forward to 2001 when she had her first brush with HR, joining a leading Executive Search firm. Finding her true calling in the HR Consulting industry, Uma sank roots and in 16 years rose to become President of India Operations.

Feeling the need to spread her wings beyond, she had a brief, yet satisfying stint as the VP HR in a public listed ecommerce company, streamlining several HR processes and growing the people business considerably.

"I wanted to be a small fish in a big pond with opportunities to grow every day," she recalls, taking her next leap of faith to land in L&T in 2019. Acutely aware of the importance of her role, it certainly has not been a walk in the park for Uma. "Leadership hiring is a fine art and there is no singular or magic formula," she shakes her head. "Sitting between the supply and demand sides is exhilarating and hiring the right people for critical management positions is so important. You sieve through multiple dimensions of a person's personal and professional journey, even analysing the way they manage themselves and their teams. You need to look beyond the resume, to the person behind the piece of paper and find clues about what drives them and how they can fit into your team and culture. It's not always about the perfect fit but the right fit."

Uma's innate drive to seize opportunities and solve challenges has been hugely satisfied by the sheer size, scale, and diversity of L&T, where the canvas is so huge, she beams. "Whether it is the Platform business or the Green Energy investment or even the large existing

businesses, the scope and opportunity are immense. You get to be a part of everything – at the visioning stage, mapping the market and ultimately getting the right talent," she shares excitedly. "Of course, there are times when you fail but failures teach you valuable lessons," she remarks wisely.

Uma credits her family for her success over the years. A daughter of a College Professor and an Army Superintendent, Uma has had the "best of two worlds," riding on her strengths: drive, conscientiousness, clarity in articulation and networking. Having been a P&L owner for long, she strongly believes, "What gets measured, gets managed. For me it is all about identifying key indications, tracking performance, analysing metrics regularly. Everything has to make good business sense," she gesticulates animatedly, and one can sense from her palpable energy that she is used to getting things done. And fast. Uma's husband, Srinivasan, is a budding agriculturist. Her son, Narayanan, is pursuing his MBBS from Stanley Medical College and daughter, Rohini, who is undoubtedly the apple of her eye, is a student of Computer Engineering.



An index of the success of Uma and her small team is that the Company has reduced the deployment of external consultants in the hiring process. "I am proud that we have built strong connections with the business to address hidden issues faster, as well as know

how to implement changes in the current work ethics which an external consultant can never fathom, especially in L&T," she says with a laugh. Her onus does not end with just finding the 'right fit'; Uma handholds them through the initial period of settling down, enabling a conducive eco-system.

**GG** You sieve through multiple dimensions of a person's personal and professional journey, even analyzing the way they manage themselves and their teams. You need to look beyond the resume, to the person behind the piece of paper and find clues about what drives them and how they can fit into your team and culture. **DD**



Even as we compose her profile, Uma has taken her next leap of faith: to head the Talent Management portfolio for Heavy Civil IC. A new role, a new team, fresh challenges but Uma is ready to take them on. "Frankly there is nothing stopping us if we give it our best," she says with the vigour of a woman on the move!



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*I wanted to be a small fish in a big pond with opportunities to grow every day. Leadership hiring is a fine art and there is no singular or magic formula.*

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# POWERED BY THE PASSION TO MAKE A MARK

## Harshitha S Kumar

Business Segment Head – DES, PT&D IC

*Work with passion and do your best in whatever you do; follow a principle of attachment with detachment, working without expecting results and face every situation with equanimity.* This has been Harshitha Kumar's life's motto and if her career with L&T is any indication, it has certainly stood her in great stead. "This advice was shared with me by my seniors who have been one of two constants in my evolution and development as an individual," she says, with all seriousness. "They have constantly mentored and moulded me, giving me every opportunity to build my skills. The other constant, has of course been my team for always supporting me to succeed in every initiative," her sense of gratitude shines through.



Harshitha's more than two decades old journey with L&T began in 2002, joining as a BIS candidate to start her M Tech programme with IIT Madras. "Selected for L&T's management trainee scheme, I got to work across various functions in the PT&D business like design, project management, project tendering, operational improvement initiatives, strategic planning and perspective planning." Later, after completing her 2-year MBA course with S P Jain Institute of Management, Harshitha re-joined the Company in corporate strategy. A return to the Chennai office in the Solar business team opened opportunities for her in the form of various leadership roles. "I was Business Segment Head for the Solar rooftop business, Head - Cluster Operations, Business Segment Head for the Microgrid & BESS businesses and Head - Global Renewables EDRC."

*"I saw every day as an opportunity to learn, do things passionately and grow as an individual."*

With the Renewables Solar business team, Harshitha got the opportunity to work on various initiatives and build businesses from scratch. "I am proud of incubating the Micro Grid and battery energy storage businesses within L&T as an intrapreneur," she shares, apart from developing with her team a containerized BESS solution, mobile solar plus storage solutions, an energy management system and setting up the BESS integration & testing facility at Kanchipuram. "We successfully executed India's largest grid-scale solar plus storage project (20 MW solar and 16 MW / 8 MWhr storage) and the country's largest microgrid project to power around 300 villages," she flags off triumphantly. Industry recognition duly followed along with awards and accolades including the India Smart Grid Forum Award, the India Energy Storage Alliance Award, and the World Innovation Congress Award from ET times, among others.



When you do what you love, you will find the excitement inside you to learn something new every day. Steve Jobs' words ring true for her. "More than gender perspectives, I saw every day as an opportunity to learn, do things passionately and grow as an individual," with capability and skill of more consequence than gender. She winces recalling one of her early postings at the Tarapur nuclear power plant construction site, which did not have even a ladies' toilet. "I was driven by a passion to learn," she remarks and despite being the only woman at site, she stood her ground to make a mark. "In fact, in my BIS M Tech programme, I was the only female among 40 participants, and," she smiles, "I topped the batch!"

The challenges for present-day women in the construction industry are comparatively less, she agrees, though several unconscious biases and stereotyping yet remain like the need to prove your ability repeatedly, the demand to behave in masculine ways to be considered competent and overcoming, what she calls, the 'maternal wall'. "There is also a tug of war with women ending up fighting with each other to bag limited opportunities," she shakes her head. "To increase gender diversity, we need to build an inclusive workplace, proactively source from diverse pipelines, and set more flexible policies. But as Gandhiji said, we need to be the change; presently, the gender ratio within my team is 50:50." She is certainly walking her talk.



*"To increase gender diversity, we need to build an inclusive workplace, proactively source for diverse pipelines, and set more flexible policies. But as Gandhiji said, we need to be the change; presently, the gender ratio within my team is 50:50."*

Born and brought up in Thrissur, Kerala, Harshitha lives with her parents and a beautiful family of greens and pets, "who greet me every morning," she smiles brightly. "I am an avid nature lover, animal welfare enthusiast and spend my leisure time trekking, gardening, planting trees, indulging in animal welfare and plastic clean-up activities." A cherished moment was when she rescued a dying animal, brought it back to life with love and care and saw it adopted by a loving family. "It thrills me to see the tree saplings you have planted across the city grow into beautiful trees over the years to increase biodiversity."

Harshitha is inspired by leaders like Mrs. Sudha Murthy. "I admire her for her simplicity, passion towards her work and social efforts specific to education, women, and youth empowerment." She is convinced that a development-hungry world will power the construction industry forward, and coupled with digitalization, the future holds immense promise for women leaders like her!



# LET'S BREAK STEREOTYPES AND DO WHAT YOU LOVE!

**Krupali U Kudva**

Head – Operations (Formations and Structures)  
Business Segment, TI IC



“It is my quality to accept challenges, which helped me overcome all the barriers and change the ‘you can’t do it’ to ‘why can’t I do it?’”

Krupali Kudva loves breaking stereotypes. Although a male-dominated fraternity for long, nothing stopped her from pursuing her talent in the field of Civil Engineering. “It is my quality to accept challenges, which helped me overcome all the barriers and change the ‘you can’t do it’ to ‘why can’t I do it?’” she shares.

“There were less than 20% girls in Civil Engineering during my college days. Once I started working at construction sites, I disproved the bias that women are the physically weaker gender, by opting to work as an Execution Engineer working on pile foundations.” Challenges were aplenty like lack of clean toilet facilities for women at site and having to travel to remote areas, but she was ready to meet them head-on and succeed.

Krupali joined L&T in August 2006 as Assistant Manager – Civil in Mumbai Region’s Construction Method Planning Cell and within months saw site action at the US Consulate site in Bandra Kurla Complex. Thereafter, there has been no looking back. “My most exciting and learning phase was from July 2011 to April 2019, when I was working as an Executive Assistant to CEO & MD of L&T Shri. S. N. Subrahmanyam sir. Working under the guidance of the top leadership on a daily basis, was a great learning experience. It was stressful and demanding, but it gave me a clear glimpse of the work pressure and stress the top management goes through in building the brand that is L&T today. It made me a tougher and better professional individual, which is essential for a leadership role.” Promoted to Deputy General Manager, Krupali was Department Head of the Engineering Project Monitoring and Control Cell. Her job portfolio includes heading an Engineering Project control initiative for quantity check and optimization before drawing, release and quicker delivery of drawings, early closure of job quantities and cost estimates. She had a brief stint with the added responsibility as Project Co-ordinator for the High Speed Rail (HSR) C6 package. Krupali is also involved with workmen management and productivity to address the issues of



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high attrition, low workmen productivity, sourcing the right manpower at the right time and retaining them to improve the project life cycle in terms of safety, quality, and time.

“Today, I am Head - Operations (Formations and Structures) Business Segment, RREC SBG,” she says, exuding vigour and passion. “I am responsible for business performance, project deliverables and profitability targets.”

Already making her presence felt, Krupali is quick to acknowledge the support of her seniors with their clear delegation, openness to new ideas, equal opportunity for learning and development, and regular feedback on performance. “They have always supported my decisions, constantly guided and mentored me, and shared valuable insights from their rich experience,” she says gratefully. “My peers, team members and subordinates have always stood by me and helped me achieve my goals throughout my journey. Overall, the support, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among all have contributed greatly to my personal and professional growth by creating a supportive work environment to drive collective success.” She feels fortunate too to be a part of India’s largest construction organization and work in an enabling work environment, enjoying equal opportunities without any gender bias.

Krupali is convinced that the tag of ‘Man’s job’ should not deter women from following their passion. “All you need is conviction and the ability to handle mental and physical pressure that is part of a civil engineering job,” she remarks. “Do what you love, for there is no stronger reason than this for you to pursue civil engineering. It is worth it if you are doing what you love. It clearly does not matter if it is going to be difficult or what people are going to think about it.”



Krupali’s support system at home is her loving family, originally hailing from Surendranagar now settled in Mumbai, with her husband Upendra, parents, sister, mother-in-law and daughter, Nidhi. With a masters in Civil Engineering, Upendra works for Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai while Nidhi is studying in Grade 3. “My life’s happiest and most memorable day was when I was blessed with my daughter and holding her for the first time in my arms,” she says, with the unalloyed joy of motherhood. “A memorable phase in my career was when I got the opportunity of working as an Executive Assistant to SNS Sir, and another cherished moment was when I received my Long Service Award for completing 15 years with L&T,” she smiles, to celebrate an association that has given her so much.



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# REACHING FOR THE STARS

**Kruti Badjatiya**  
Deputy General Manager – CEO & MD’s Office



*As SNS Sir’s Executive Assistant, my learning curve has been extremely steep. Working with SNS Sir is extremely intense because to handle the kind of detailing and precision he demands, it is absolutely essential to be on top of everything*



The first girl from her family to study engineering and the only one to be selected by L&T from her college as part of the GET batch of 2006, Kruti joined the EDRC design team first. After a couple of relatively quiet years, she got her first big break at the Mumbai International Airport project. “To work on such a prestigious project was a heaven-sent opportunity and my experience under Project Director, DKS Sir was very inspiring,” she says with vigor. “I was empowered to express myself, meet clients to present design changes, get approvals and more. Perhaps, that is when I lost my fear of dealing with people in positions of power,” an aspect that would hold her in great stead years later when handling the offices of both Mr. A M Naik and Mr. S N Subrahmanyam for almost four years.

She is the only employee in L&T who reports to both AMN and SNS and not in her wildest dreams did Kruti Badjatiya ever think that anchoring an event could alter her career path so dramatically. “It was a BIS conclave in early 2014 and SNS Sir was the Chief Guest,” she recalls. “After the event, he asked me to meet him the next morning.” She pauses. “Just like that I was part of his office, and I am enjoying that privilege even today, nine years later.”

*AMN Sir is so much larger than life and am truly grateful to be able to share space with a person of his stature. His macro & micro approach towards every matter he deals including his philanthropic activities are something I am trying my level best to imbibe.*



Kruti returned to Chennai in 2011, to complete a 2-year course with IIM Indore on Project Management and worked with EDRC on projects like TCS Rajahat and the Safdarjung Hospital under Mr. Saha. “Dealing with clients came naturally to me as I became a bridge between the EDRC design team and clients who shared my culture and language.”

“As SNS Sir’s Executive Assistant, my learning curve has been extremely steep,” she says with a sense of awe. “In fact, I was so raw initially that I did not know the difference between sales and invoicing,” she shakes her head. Thrown into the deep end, Kruti learnt to swim and how! Initially, involved with B&F IC, LTI and LTTS businesses, she also worked to incubate Smart World & Communications. “Working with SNS Sir is extremely intense because to handle the kind of detailing and precision he demands, it is absolutely essential to be on top of everything,” she says seriously. “The way he objectively approaches issues, manages crises and, most importantly, how he deals with people are some of my most important learning while being a part of his office. His approach towards people and various situations is an art to learn,” she smiles.

When SNS took over as CEO & MD in July 2017, the canvas increased manifold. “He was now handling all the businesses of the L&T Group and I was managing a team of 12 – 15 EAs both in Mumbai and Chennai. With time, we have learnt to look at things holistically and respond with the speed and precision that is expected of us.” The Mindtree acquisition gave Kruti and her team a different type of learning given its scale and complexity. “I remember that immediately after the announcement, I flew with SNS Sir to the US and met some 40 clients over 4 days! The learning here being Clients always come first.”

The COVID experience was an extremely humbling one for all. “I pray that we never have to revisit those days of the pandemic,” moans Kruti. “It taught us a lot of things. Those were frightening days too for our share price had plunged to dangerous levels and we were not sure what would happen.” Managing online interactions with the senior leadership, and generally keeping things rolling took a toll on all, especially Kruti.



*His calmness, flexibility and ever encouraging nature are the secret to our family life. He has never told me no for anything and I am very grateful to him for that.*



After a 2-month break, Kruti turned to talent acquisition, especially senior level hiring and welcomed the opportunity to interact and negotiate with people in high places. During an intense 6 month period in 2022, she handled Strategic Talent Acquisition, LTIMindtree merger - a 20-billion-dollar one-of-its-kind merger, followed by the LTTS & SWC merger and Data Centre projects. “I am now Head Projects for L&T’s Data Centre business and am loving the challenge. Our first Data Centre will be launched by mid this year,” she says with conviction.

Working with the Group Chairman has honed Kruti into a stronger person. “AMN Sir is so much larger than life and am truly grateful to be able to share space with a person of his stature,” she says with awe. “His macro & micro approach towards every matter he deals including his philanthropic activities are something I am trying my level best to imbibe.” In her own small way to give back to society she works very closely with Mrs Meena Subrahmanyam, with whom she has formed a great bond over time, for various Prayas & CSR initiatives.

“All what I have done till now would just not have been possible without the support of my parents, my husband, Bharat and my family,” she says simply. She met Bharat in college, and he is still a colleague, working with B&F IC. “His calmness, flexibility and ever encouraging nature are the secret to our family life. He has never told me no for anything and I am very grateful to him for that,” she smiles. Kruti comes from an Indore-based joint family, that taught her to deal with every task responsibly. Her father and brother run a printing & packaging business and her mother is a gold medalist doctorate in Sanskrit.

SNS’s declaration at the Women’s Day event on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, that he would like to soon see a women Executive Director in L&T gives women like Kruti the license to dream. The challenges of working in the Company’s top office are huge but it is also a cauldron that moulds you into a winner. Kruti is one case in point.





## CHANNELIZING ALL-WOMEN POWER!

**T. Kanagambihai**  
Project Manager, B&F IC



A phone call from BU Head Sreechand Sreedhar is all it took to change the course of T Kanagambihai's life. "He informed that I was being considered to lead an all-women team for an office project and although the opportunity sounded exciting, I was caught in a dilemma with my family who were based out of Bengaluru, my children's school and so on," she shares about her initial uncertainty. After carefully weighing all the pros and cons, she decided to take the plunge and then the organization supported her completely. "I attended an interview with the SBG Head, Sukumar Hebbar Sir and before I knew what was happening, I was doing the Bhoomi pooja for the Technology Centre 4



*One day, I realized that language was just a medium to communicate that helped me overcome that diffidence and there has been no stopping thereafter. The point is I never gave up!*



(TC 4) project as the Project Manager," she gleams, "flanked by an all-woman project team. I think it was my first in L&T and that certainly was the most memorable day of my life," her excitement is almost infectious.



*My all-women colleagues are very supportive, are available throughout, sincere in their roles and responsibilities trust my decisions, and we work like one unit.*



Hers is a story of some struggle. Having studied in Tamil medium, she had an initial diffidence to communicate in English although she was technically sound. "One day, I realized that language was just a medium to communicate, which helped me overcome that diffidence and there has been no stopping thereafter," she says in a matter-of-fact tone, adding, "The point is I never gave up!"

Having joined L&T as a lateral in 2012, Kanagambihai has traced her growth path with planning in office buildings and public spaces for over 2 decades. Her first assignment was as client billing engineer at the RMZ Galleria Project, Bengaluru, then as costing engineer at the SAP LAB project after which she assumed the role of Cluster Project Coordinator in Bengaluru. In 2018, she moved to the L&T Tech Park-1 project as the Planning In-charge to handle contract management, costing, scheduling, vendor management, customer co-ordination and more. "This project is close to my heart," she shares passionately. "The Quality Management System implemented here was roundly appreciated by the client and we received many accolades like the ACI award, a 4-star award from the British Safety Council and appreciation from the LRQA audit team for best documentation." She adds, "I believe projects like this can raise the standards of our business to great heights."

Working with an all-woman team at the TC 4 project is "not very different" according to Kanagambihai. "They are very supportive, available throughout, sincere in their roles and responsibilities, trust my decisions, and we work like one unit," she remarks, proud of her team. "Although it is a men-dominated industry, I have never really viewed it like that," she remarks. "I considered my field of



*The Quality Management System implemented at the L&T Tech Park - 1 project was thoroughly appreciated by the client and we received many accolades like the ACI award, a 4-star award from the British Safety Council and appreciation from the LRQA audit team for best documentation.*

interest and did everything possible to give it my best. It requires passion and hard work to perform a job, every other factor is just external." Of course, it would not have been so easy for her without the support of her seniors.

She is proud to be a part of L&T, where diversity is a priority, and everyone enjoys equal opportunities based on merit without any bias and she is impressed that the organization supports employees with constant training to develop their skills. "L&T expects not just best quality but supports employees to meet those expectations. I try to work on these lines."

A native of Thinnakulam in Trichy, she draws inspiration from her mother who has single-handedly raised 5 children after her father's untimely death. "She made me realise that women can handle any situation, taught me to be independent and supports me in any difficult situation." Kanagambihai credits her close-knit family comprising her husband M. Suriya Prakash, a software engineer and her two daughters, S. Vaishnavi, and S. Varshini, studying in 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> standards respectively, for her success. "They have always encouraged me to pursue my life's goals and my mantra is to be passionate, bold, accept risks, convert those risks to opportunities and inspire yourself and others too."



"Construction sites include a variety of jobs, competing priorities, and high-pressure deadlines," she shares with a wry smile. "Managing all of that takes a lot of teamwork and I make sure that every member of my team feels empowered to voice their opinion, that means a better, more trustworthy workforce and such open communication translates to more successful projects." The TC 4 Project will be one of them, and she wouldn't have it any other way.



Celebrating  
**WOMEN  
POWER**  
@ L&T Construction

# L&T Construction - where the voice of women is heard.

“As part of our LAKSHYA 2026 plan, we have set ourselves a target to increase the percentage of women employees to 10% by 2026. Pushing up our Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) quotient at the workplace is no tokenism. There is empirical evidence to prove how women participation at project sites and shopfloors apart from offices has translated into significant improvements in efficiency levels across fronts.”

– SNS



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