

ACCEPT, RECOGNISE, INSPIRE, SUPPORT, EMPOWER

2025



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Introduction

Much ink has been spilled on diversity, inclusion, equity, the right order (is it DEI or D&I or EIB?), or whether to reword it to belongingness to avoid political backlash. At Khaitan & Co, the focus has been on embedding these principles meaningfully through ARISE, an initiative that started in 2019.

When we launched ARISE, DEI was at a nascent stage in India, particularly within the Indian legal fraternity. Six years later, it is a core part of how Khaitan & Co leads, serves clients and shapes the profession.

Our DEI journey has shaped up through 100+ touchpoints, including workshops, trainings, internal and external collaborations and thought leadership initiatives. Through a series of dialogue sessions that enabled members to come together in open, trust-based conversations, we have seen growing interest and a stronger sense of psychological safety. Alongside six external events and four curated partnerships, these efforts have fostered deeper engagement, stronger advocacy and a more intentional, firm-wide commitment to inclusion. The milestones that follow offer a snapshot of some of the key moments and initiatives that have shaped this journey.

Globally, DEI has moved into business strategy and ESG goals, leveraging data, analytics and leadership training. We monitor these trends while tailoring conversations to India's context, addressing issues such as social mobility and intergenerational inclusions differently from the Western countries.

Today, our DEI efforts span across gender, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, disability, mental health and wellbeing, intergenerational concerns, progressive leaves and future-ready playbooks. With 20+ volunteers and a dedicated team, ARISE is driven by all KCO members, ensuring it remains not just an initiative but an integral part of our growth story.

As we look back, the past year and a half has been one of meaningful conversations, renewed collaborations and steady progress across our DEI verticals. Read on ahead to see not just some of these key moments and milestones that have defined our journey so far, but also an exclusive interview and reflections from colleagues on how DEI continues to take shape at Khaitan & Co.

ARISE Journey: Moments That Matter

2019

Launch of ARISE

Concept paper authored and presented to Executive Committee; ARISE officially launched in Dec 2019.

2020

First Pride Month Celebration

Firm publicly celebrated Pride Month for the first time and adopted Pride colours in our logo.

2022

Collaboration with She Breaks the Law (SBTL)

Partnered with SBTL to promote dialogue, leadership insights, and networking for women leaders that won the Firm awards for its initiatives.

2021

DEI Member Resource Group; Disability Handbook (1st Ed.)

Established the Member Resource Group; published the Handbook on Rights of Persons with Disabilities with We Too Can Trust.

2023

Compendium on LGBTQIA+ Rights; Menstrual Leave Policy; Listening Circles

Released landmark Compendium on LGBTQIA+ Rights with Keshav Suri Foundation; introduced menstrual leave; launched women-led Listening Circles.

2024

Disability Handbook (2nd Ed.), MANTLE and Singapore Roundtable

Launched second edition of Disability Handbook with Godrej DEI Lab; co-launched the Mental Health Advocacy Network for Legal Environments and held a DEI event in Singapore for the first time.

2025

Mixed Cohort Listening Circle; Launch of Women in Boardroom Report

Opened up the Listening Circle initiative to all members for the first time; launched Presence to Influence: Advancing Women in Indian Boardrooms report with Aon and Ladies Who Lead.

ARISE: Celebrating a Journey of Inclusion and Empowerment

Driving Meaningful Conversations on Inclusion

Listening Circles

Some of our most meaningful breakthroughs this past year have not come from grand gestures, but from simply sitting down and listening. Our **Listening Circles**, now a quiet yet powerful tradition, have offered women professionals across generations a safe, structured space to connect, reflect, and seek informal mentorship. Between 2024 and 2025, we hosted **nine** Listening Circles across our offices in Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata, engaging an estimated **270 participants**, featuring the following themes and speakers:



Listening Circles across cities

APRIL 2024

Mumbai

Networking Strategies: How to Build
Your Personal Brand

Tanu Banerjee, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Vidushi Gupta, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Priyancka Dastur, Director, Khaitan & Co

MAY 2024

Delhi NCR

On Professional Pivots and Networking
Strategies for Women

Aabha Bakaya, Founder & CEO, Ladies
Who Lead
Nidhi Killawala, Partner, Khaitan & Co

AUGUST 2024

Bengaluru

Leadership, Law and Life: A Women's Perspective

Renu Gopalakrishnan, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Tamarra Sequeira, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Sukanya Hazarika, Director, Khaitan & Co

OCTOBER 2024

Mumbai

Navigating Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace

Sushmita Das, Senior Director, FTI Consulting
Purti Minawala, Partner, Khaitan & Co

APRIL 2025

Kolkata

Navigating Health and Wellbeing at the Workplace

Nandini Khaitan, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Riya Dutta, Principal Associate, Khaitan & Co

Chennai

Women in Law: Life and Leadership

Arva Merchant, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Latika Rao, Associate Director, Khaitan & Co

SEPTEMBER 2024

Delhi NCR

Investing in Women's Future

In collaboration with Trust Plutus

DECEMBER 2024

Bengaluru

Empowering Women in Law: Perspectives and Pathways

Smita Jha, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Swathy Ramanath, Partner, Khaitan & Co

MAY 2025

Mumbai

Mentorship Matters: Listening, Learning, Leading

Vineet Shingal, Partner, Khaitan & Co
Tanushree Bhuvalka, Partner, Khaitan & Co

The breadth of the themes and speakers reflect the growing interest and trust in these spaces. This year also brought several firsts, including our first-ever mixed cohort Listening Circle in Mumbai, which focused on mentorship as a key theme for inclusive growth and dialogue. Few organisations

have sustained such multi-city, multi-cohort conversation spaces. For us, listening circles are an important part of how we implement DEI.



First Mixed Cohort Listening Circle 2025

Fireside Chats and Roundtables

As part of our ongoing DEI journey, we have hosted series of fireside chats and roundtables across Singapore and India, each exploring a unique dimension of inclusion and leadership. For instance:

- We curated a fireside chat for leadership in October 2024, on the theme of **Fostering an Inclusive Culture: Strategies for Leadership**, with guest speakers **Hervé Ekué** (Managing Partner, A&O Shearman) and **Pallavi Gopinath Aney** (Partner and Joint Chair, India Group, A&O Shearman). Moderated by **Bijal Ajinkya** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), the session was a deep dive into inclusive leadership and accountability through a DEI lens.
- This was followed by our inaugural DEI Roundtable in Singapore in November 2024, which focused on **Women in Leadership**, featuring prominent general counsels and law firm partners from Singaporean organisations such as Rajah & Tann, Linklaters, Shook Lin & Bok, CMS Holborn, Deutsche Bank, to name a few, with **Manisha Shroff** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), **Shabnam Sheikh** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), **Sukanya Hazarika** (Director, Khaitan & Co) and **Susanah Naushad** (Counsel, Khaitan & Co) leading the conversation from our end. The exchange highlighted the importance of data-driven approaches, addressing unconscious bias, and fostering equitable access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.



Fireside Chat with A&O Shearman



Singapore Roundtable 2024

Psychological Inclusion Dialogues

In May 2025, we explored the theme of psychological inclusion as part of observing Mental Health Awareness Month:

- In our Mumbai office, we hosted a fireside chat in collaboration with **Societe Generale India** on the theme of **From Awareness to Action: On Building Psychologically Safe Workplaces**, with speakers **Rabindra Jhunjhunwala** (Partner, Khaitan & Co) and **Dr Katan Hirachand** (CEO and Country Head, Societe Generale India) discussing the importance of open conversations, inclusive policies, and empathetic leadership.
- In parallel, we hosted a roundtable in our Singapore office on the theme of **Psychological Inclusion at the Workplace**, led by **Dr Jonathan Marshall** (Executive Coach, Marshall Consulting) and moderated by **Sukanya Hazarika** (Director, Khaitan & Co) and **Jean Muller** (Executive Director, Khaitan & Co) with a focus on building supportive and nurturing environments while understanding individual needs and addressing challenges.

Each of these dialogues has deepened our shared understanding that inclusion is not a milestone, but a continuous, collective effort, one that makes belonging a lived experience for everyone at Khaitan & Co.



Fireside chat with Societe Generale



Singapore Roundtable 2025

External Collaborations and Cross-Industry Perspectives

We continued with our external collaborations throughout 2025, forming platforms that brought together voices from different industries to reflect on how inclusion, culture, and workplace expectations are evolving. These touchpoints allowed us to learn from changemakers beyond the legal fraternity, explore generational shifts, understand emerging DEI priorities, and collectively examine what purposeful inclusion looks like in practice.



- In August 2025, we collaborated with **UBS** for a session on the theme of **Shifting Attitudes and Workplace Expectations of Gen Z**, led by **Vidushi Gupta** (Partner, Khaitan & Co) and **Shubhi Pahwa** (Legal Counsel, UBS). The session aimed at bridging generational differences and fostering dialogue and inclusivity across teams.
- Meanwhile, in October 2025, we hosted **Alison Eddy** (Partner Ambassador for Inclusion, Irwin Mitchell) for a roundtable on the theme of **From Intent to Impact: Purposeful DEI Within Workplaces**. Moderated by **Sukanya Hazarika** (Director, Khaitan & Co), the session comprised of senior HR and DEI leaders across various industries exchanging notes on up-and-coming trends in the DEI space, such as AI and technological innovation, rise of hybrid work models and shifting geopolitical realities, to name a few.



UBS Panel Discussion



Roundtable with Irwin Mitchell

Thought Leadership and Advocacy

Our flagship thought leadership effort this year was a report examining gender diversity in Indian boardrooms, for which we partnered with **Ladies Who Lead** and **AON**. The report [Presence to Influence: Women in Indian Boardrooms](#) explores the cultural and systemic shifts needed to enable more women to take their place at the board table as decision-makers and value creators, featuring analysis of BSE 200 companies as well as inputs from interviews with 40 independent women directors.

As part of this study, we hosted a roundtable in February 2025, featuring **Naina Lal Kidwai** (Former Executive Director and Chairperson, HSBC), **Sandip Das** (Former Managing Director and CEO, Jio), **Dr Deepali Pant Joshi** (Former Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India), **Neha Huddar** (Former VP - Finance, Reliance Industries),



Women In Boardroom Roundtable 2025

Vanita Bhargava (Partner, Khaitan & Co), **Monika Srivastava** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), and **Tanvi Kumar** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), with the discussion moderated by **Aabha Bakaya** (Founder & CEO, Ladies Who Lead) and **Sukanya Hazarika** (Director, Khaitan & Co). The roundtable touched upon various aspects in relation to diversifying boardrooms such as how to build and sustain diverse, future-ready boards, and the importance of structural advocacy.

Further, to mark the launch of our report, we hosted an exclusive event in November 2025 at our Mumbai office, in collaboration with Aon and Ladies Who Lead. The evening featured an engaging fireside chat with **Shiv Shivakumar** (Author; Chairman of the Board of Directors, Vadilal Industries), moderated by **Archanna Das** (COO, Ladies Who Lead), with the conversation delving into the evolving landscape of women on boards and examining how allyship, networks, and inclusive leadership can drive meaningful gender balance at the highest levels of corporate governance. The session began with a joint presentation by Aon and Khaitan & Co, highlighting key takeaways from the report, including data trends, interview-led insights, and recommendations for boards and organisations committed to advancing gender diversity.



Women in Boardroom Post-Launch Event

This report positions Khaitan & Co not only as a legal counsel but a partner in building inclusive governance.

Driving LGBTQIA+ Inclusion: Pride and Beyond

As part of our Pride celebrations over 2024 and 2025, we kicked off each year with informal get-togethers for Firm members across offices, offering a space to connect, exchange thoughts on our diversity initiatives, and celebrate our shared commitment to inclusion. Across both years, we also hosted Watch & Discuss sessions, rolled out the Pride email signature with the hashtag **#MatterOfPride**, distributed Pride badges, and in 2024, conducted our annual Pride Quiz. Central to these celebrations was our ongoing commitment to foregrounding lived experience: each flagship Pride event featured queer guest leaders and experts, ensuring that conversations were shaped by voices at the heart of the community:



- In 2024, we hosted a virtual panel discussion on the theme **On the Legal Crossroads: The Way Ahead for the LGBTQIA+ Community**, featuring **Sharif Rangnekar** (Director, Rainbow Lit Fest) and **Anish Gawande** (Founder, Pink List India) with **Nandini Khaitan** (Partner, Khaitan & Co) moderating the discussion. The panel explored key issues such as legal entitlements arising from marriage, the need for stronger anti-discrimination laws, and ways to foster allyship and inclusive cultures in organisations.
- In 2025, our main highlight was a hybrid-format fireside chat on **Pride with Purpose: Fostering Inclusive Workplaces**, with speakers **Zoya** (DEI Lead, Godrej Properties) and **Purti Minawala** (Partner, Khaitan & Co), which reflected on lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals and emphasised the role of unlearning, empathy, and intention in building safe, supportive workplace environments.



Pride with Purpose: Fostering Inclusive Workplaces



Panel Discussion on The Way Ahead for the LGBTQIA+ Community

As part of our commitment to sustained inclusion, our efforts under the LGBTQIA+ vertical extend well beyond Pride Month, with year-round programming designed to build awareness, allyship, and equitable practices. One such initiative was a virtual fireside chat in November 2025, on the theme **Law, Identity, and Change**, featuring **Saurabh Kirpal** (Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India) in conversation with **Aseem Chaturvedi** (Partner, Khaitan & Co). The discussion explored how identity intersects with institutional culture within the legal profession, and reflected on themes of representation, inclusion, and the lived experience of equality in practice.



Pride Month 2025 Celebrations

Mental Health Support and Awareness

Mental wellbeing has always been part of an active conversation at Khaitan & Co, but over the past one year, we have turned up the volume. Our **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** with **Optum** provides confidential support for members and their families, from counselling to legal and financial assistance. In collaboration with Optum, we routinely conduct webinars on topics such as emotional intelligence, burnout prevention, intergenerational diversity, fitness and healthy eating, making our approach both practical and supportive. In the last year and a half, we conducted **15+** webinars, engaging over **600 participants**.

As part of our efforts to normalise conversations on mental health, we also run awareness campaigns each year to mark World Mental Health Day. In October 2024, we hosted a four-part series titled **Breaking the Stigma**, which focused on ADHD, OCD, bipolar disorder and PTSD — conditions that are often misunderstood and give rise to workplace stereotypes. In October 2025, we followed this with a limited four-part series titled **Mental Healthcare, Demystified**, which addressed frequently asked questions and common misconceptions about therapy, mental health support, and the broader mental healthcare ecosystem. The series explored what to expect in therapy, the role of therapeutic relationships, different mental health professionals and medication, how progress is measured, and widely held myths.

Industry Collaboration on Mental Wellbeing

Reinforcing our commitment to a psychologically safe and supportive workplace, we have joined hands with **Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co**, **Trilegal**, **Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas**, and **JSA** to co-create **MANTLE (Mental Health Advocacy Network for Legal Environments)**. This first-of-its-kind alliance aims to reduce stigma, foster shared learning, and embed mental well-being into the culture of legal workplaces. In May 2024, the firms came together for an inaugural panel discussion, **Balancing the Scales: Mental Wellbeing in Law**, moderated by noted mental health advocate **Chris Parson**. The discussion prompted honest conversations on recognising signs of distress, accessing support, and cultivating empathy across the profession. The collaboration now moves toward finalising a joint charter that will guide MANTLE's shared priorities and long-term impact across the legal community.





Panel Discussion on Balancing the Scales: Mental Wellbeing in Law

Mental Health First Aid

As we deepen our focus on mental health, we piloted Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for senior stakeholders in collaboration with **MHFA India**, with four senior members availing the training between October and December 2024. Taking this effort forward, members of our HR, L&R, and L&D teams engaged in a two-day MHFA workshop facilitated by **Skooc** in November 2025. Designed to equip participants to recognise early signs of mental health concerns, respond with empathy, and support colleagues towards appropriate help, the workshop blended interactive discussions, roleplay, and case-based learning, and offered valuable insights into navigating sensitive workplace conversations with care and confidence. Our efforts to institutionalise MHFA mark an important stride in embedding empathy, openness, and psychological safety firmly within the workplace.



Skooc Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Championing Accessibility and Inclusion

Disability Rights and Research

Our DEI journey has gone beyond celebrations and conversations, driving tangible outputs through advocacy and thought leadership, especially on the front of disability inclusion. To mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in 2024, we released the second edition of our **Handbook on Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, in collaboration with the **Godrej DEI Lab**.

We also hosted a panel discussion focused on **Workplace Inclusion and Disability Rights**, featuring speakers **Aradhana Lal** (SVP - Sustainability & ESG, Lemon Tree Hotels), **Ananya Sharma** (General Counsel, JSW Group), **Zoya** (DEI Lead, Godrej Properties), **Madhavi Latha** (Founder, Yes We Too Can Trust), **Arva Merchant** (Partner and lead author of the Handbook, Khaitan & Co), with **Aakash Choubey** (former Partner, Khaitan & Co) moderating the discussion. The event brought together inspiring voices from across industries, including leaders from sustainability, law, real estate, and social impact, for a powerful exchange on advancing inclusion and accessibility. This is part of our commitment to invest in research-led DEI.



Panel discussion on Workplace Inclusion and Disability Rights



Indian Sign Language

Furthering our efforts to build empathetic, informed and inclusive workplaces, we conducted a workshop on Indian Sign Language (ISL) in September 2025 in collaboration with **Atypical Advantage**, hosted in-person at our Mumbai office. Led by Pradeep More, a pioneer of the State Level Association of the Deaf, Maharashtra, the session combined myth-busting around the deaf community with hands-on learning of basic ISL phrases. By equipping participants to communicate more confidently and respectfully with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, the workshop not only strengthened our commitment to accessibility but also fostered a more inclusive environment within our Firm and beyond.



Indian Sign Language ISL Workshop with Atypical Advantage

DEI Spotlight

Driving Inclusion & Equity: In Conversation with Parmesh Shahani (Head, Godrej DEI Lab)



Parmesh Shahani

Our collaboration with the Godrej DEI Lab stems from a shared belief that meaningful, sustainable inclusion is possible only through systems-level change and collective action. Over the past year, we have worked together on impactful initiatives like the second edition of the Handbook on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a panel discussion on LGBTQIA+ inclusion at the workplace – partnerships that reflect our aligned values and mutual

commitment to equity.

Given the Lab's leadership in intersectional inclusion, it was only fitting to feature Parmesh Shahani, Head of the Godrej DEI Lab, in this year's newsletter. Rooted in Godrej's founding values of liberty, equality, and justice, the Lab continues to shape how business can drive social change across industries. In this exclusive Q&A with Parmesh Shahani, we delve into India Inc's evolving inclusion journey, the importance of systems change, and how business can act as catalysts for social equity.

Godrej has been committed to fostering DEI for years, even before it gained traction within India Inc. Can you share how the DEI philosophy at Godrej has evolved over time and what role does the Godrej DEI Lab play in advancing this further?

At Godrej, we have been talking about DEI and workplace inclusion before it became a buzzword. Since our founding in 1897, shaped by the independence and Swadeshi movements, we have drawn values from constitutional ideals of liberty, equality, freedom, and justice, principles that continue to guide our DEI philosophy. At its core, DEI at Godrej is about enabling people to bring their whole selves to work.

So, what would it take for a 127-year-old company like Godrej to make that happen? We began with progressive policies, like recognizing same-sex partnerships in our leave policies. This evolved into our **Care @ Godrej** framework — offering leave for eldercare, secondary caregiving (because come on, who says maternity and paternity leave in 2025!), daycare support, and gender-affirming surgery benefits.





We have also taken the inclusion conversation beyond our offices, advocating with colleges and through initiatives like **LOUD (Live Out Ur Dream)**, now in its thirteenth season. Every year, we witness the shift that happens when students see successful, diverse role models in the corporate world. When a respected company like Godrej speaks about inclusion, it becomes more than a trend; it becomes a value they want to understand and adopt.

With the Godrej DEI Lab, we created an experimental space, a think tank, to consolidate our inclusion work with women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities. Simultaneously, we have begun sharing our frameworks with corporate India to say, "Here's how it can be done, and it works." The Lab is about building an ecosystem of change and asking: "What would it take to reimagine not just Godrej, but an India where every Indian feels included?"

You played a significant role in shaping and leading the Godrej India Culture Lab, which served as a platform for rethinking cultural narratives before it was revamped to the Godrej DEI Lab. How has your journey within Godrej shaped your approach to DEI? What lessons from the Culture Lab have influenced your current work at the Godrej DEI Lab?

The Godrej India Culture Lab began with the aim of creating a new kind of space where we could cross-pollinate different people and also different ideas about contemporary India, in an ongoing conversation. So, we had folks from academia, business, policy-making, thinkers, writers, and filmmakers in events that were completely open and free to the public to attend. In our ten-year run from 2011 to 2021, we hosted folks like the feminist legend **Urvashi Butalia**, the iconic journalist **P Sainath** and well as visiting thinkers like the American media scholar **Henry Jenkins**.

We did book reading sessions with authors, talks with fashion designers, academics, poets, policy makers and film critics on issues of identity, gender, LGBTQIA+ rights, women's rights, urban-rural circularities, and feminisms, among other themes. We conducted pop up museums and made websites on memes and cultural landscapes. We also launched **A Manifesto for Trans Inclusion in The Indian Workplace** in 2018, which was a white paper that made a strong case for trans-inclusion and was a practical guide to help companies implement the framework.

The DEI Lab, which we started in late 2023, is an offshoot of the work we were doing from 2011 to 2021 at the India Culture Lab. At the DEI Lab, we talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion, keeping good, powerful storytelling at the heart of

the conversation. So, even when we do research-led projects, we lead with stories of people who have been impacted by making spaces more inclusive, and we use their stories to reimagine what workplaces can and should be.

The recently launched Pride Fund in collaboration with the Keshav Suri Foundation and Radhika Piramal marks a significant step in supporting LGBTQIA+ organizations in India. What led to this initiative, and how do you see it transforming the landscape for queer community led non-profits?

At Godrej, we have always been strong advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights. We were among the first in the corporate (and law firm) landscape to begin conversations around policies for same-sex partnerships for employees. The Pride Fund is just one of several initiatives we are leading as a group, focused on queer-led philanthropy. Let me begin with some context: India receives less than 1% of global funding for LGBTQIA+ issues. Only two of India's top 50 philanthropic givers identify queer issues as a priority.

Moreover, just 27% of NGOs serving the queer community have a national presence. This means that if you are a queer-led grassroots organization working on social impact, access to consistent and meaningful funding remains a major challenge. We wanted to change that by providing focused support and resources for the community. To take a step in that direction, we partnered with the Keshav Suri Foundation and Radhika Piramal to create a first-of-its-kind fund, by the queers, for the queers.

In parallel, we launched a report with Dasra titled **Against All Odds**, which maps out what queer futures in India can look like. In the report's foreword, we called on allies and members of the queer community to walk the talk. And we mean it. For us, the Pride Fund this year is just the beginning. We are committed to making next year even bigger, better, and more transformative for the queer-led NGO landscape in India.

Your book "Queeristan" led emphasis on LGBTQIA+ inclusion within corporate India. Since its release in 2020, do you feel that meaningful shifts have taken place in India Inc in terms of workplace inclusion?

I think there is no one pass or fail answer to this question. I take heart in seeing that companies are trying to understand why it is important to create policies which are inclusive. For example, one of our business, Godrej Consumer Products is starting a factory in Tamil Nadu where there is a conversation to commit to 50%





hires in the factory being women and 5% to be people with disabilities (PWDs) and LGBTQ+ people. Even within other businesses like sales or agriculture, we are asking questions about gender, and how we can work with communities, families, and leadership to ensure inclusion happens in a way that is organic. One of the reports we launched this year at the Lab with Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) and **Dr Ashwini Deshpande**, was on “returnships” aka programmes which ensure that women who have taken a break for motherhood, marriage, or caregiving, are able to rejoin the workplace smoothly. We are also taking notes from other organisations doing compelling work, like the Gender and Policy Lab in Chennai, which with the Greater Chennai Corporation, is doing a campaign called the **Safe Mobility Fellowship** which does safety audits in the city to map out security and accessibility.

When I was doing my podcast **India Included**, which is out now, I spoke to **Amrita Ganguly**, who is the Chief Diversity Officer at Tata Motors. She spoke about how, since 2020, every Tata Harrier and Tata Safari SUV has been assembled, start-to-finish, from scratch, by teams staffed fully by women at their plant in Pimpri-Chinchwad! This is the kind of work in workplace inclusion that I think needs to be highlighted and spoken about. Our deeper work also remains on attitudes. At Godrej, we have a host of leave policies for paternity, for eldercare, and for gender affirming surgeries. But if someone is taking any of these leaves, how are their managers reacting? What impact is it having on their careers when they rejoin? I think this shift in attitude is where so much of meaningful work when it comes to workplace inclusion remains and is what we need to focus on.

Lastly, given your vast experience in the DEI space, what are some things to keep in mind while assessing outcomes / impact of DEI initiatives?

We do a bunch of things here. Every year we publish an annual report, where we give a DEI scorecard to our business units – this includes, percentage of women representation in white collar and blue-collar employment, and how these maps across headcount, attrition, and hiring. We also do this with LGBTQIA+ employees and people with disabilities. Scoring well on this scorecard is also an incentive for senior leadership at each group company, because we put this in their goal sheets and targets. So, this not just something they hurriedly do at the end of the year, but instead look at setting and establishing targets which they can build on through the year. We also have a DEI Council which is drawn from leaders across the Godrej Industries group that mentor and advise both the Lab and the business DEI teams. Our DEI efforts at group companies go way beyond numbers – we think of inclusion in our products, in our services, in our infrastructure and also in our advertising and communication. I think anyone who is serious about inclusion has to think comprehensively about comprehensive outcomes.

Who We Are: Insights from Across the Firm



The Quiet Power of Being Seen

Seven months ago, I joined Khaitan & Co as a Business Travel Consultant. I approached my interview with confidence in my capabilities, yet aware that my masculine-presenting appearance might invite bias. Instead, I was evaluated purely on merit. Not once was I asked to disclose my identity and to this day, being open about my LGBTQIA+ identity remains entirely my choice, never an obligation.

A subtle but powerful sign of inclusion was discovering a gender-neutral washroom. For those of us who navigate gendered spaces thoughtfully, this small gesture brings dignity, comfort, and reassurance.

Soon after joining, I was warmly welcomed into the ARISE core committee, an opportunity that allows me to contribute actively to creating a more inclusive environment. Being out at work has brought quiet affirmations: respectful conversations, acceptance, and the freedom to simply be myself without explanation.

In my 17-year professional journey across five diverse industries, having travelled to over 25 countries and built deep expertise in the travel domain, I have rarely seen others from the LGBTQIA+ community who are visibly out in corporate spaces.

While growing up, I did not see anyone like me in leadership or formal workplaces. Today, I take pride in being that presence because visibility is not always loud it is about showing up, thriving authentically, and in doing so, reminding others that they can too.



Pratibha Singh

Manager, Administration



Redefining Possibility: My Lived Experience of Acceptance at Work

As someone living with a physical challenge, entering the professional world came with both anticipation and uncertainty. Would people recognise my potential or define me by my limitations? But at our firm, I found something rare – an environment where ability is not measured by mobility, but by contribution, commitment and character.

From day one, I felt seen – not for my disability, but for my ideas. Practical accessibility measures such as ramp access, ergonomic tools, and flexible work arrangements have significantly improved the work environment. But what truly stands out are the human aspects of colleagues, the leaders who listen with empathy, and the culture that values every voice at the table.

Cultural diversity adds a vibrant dimension to our shared experience. I have had the joy of celebrating festivals I had not encountered before, savouring global cuisines during team lunches, and connecting with colleagues whose life journeys are vastly different from mine. These moments have reinforced a powerful truth: inclusion goes beyond accessibility; it is rooted in genuine acceptance and mutual respect.

Building a family life with a physical challenge brings unique barriers – social stigma, inaccessibility, and assumptions of dependency. These often overshadow one's resilience and capacity for meaningful relationships. Gaining acceptance and sharing responsibilities requires constant strength and self-advocacy.

My journey has not always been easy, but the support I have received here has allowed me to grow with confidence in my personal and professional life. It is not just about breaking barriers, it is about building bridges and I am proud to cross them with this team.



Pralhad Jadhav

Associate Director, Library



Belonging in Action

Having grown up in an environment where differences in background, ability, and belief were not only accepted but genuinely valued, I learned early on to seek understanding before judgment. This perspective was further shaped in law school, particularly through the influence of a mentor who is totally blind (his preferred term) and resolute in being defined by anything other than his intellect and integrity. From him, I learned that true inclusion goes beyond accommodating diversity, it means fully recognising and valuing people for who they are and what they bring along.

In the demanding context of legal practice, where time is at a premium and billable hours are ever-present, DEI initiatives run the risk of being at the periphery. But at Khaitan & Co, they are part of the firm's identity, woven into its culture, values, and legacy. That alignment creates not just professional motivation, but a deep personal sense of belonging. KCO, in many ways, is home, and contributing to a more inclusive culture here feels both a duty as a responsible member and a privilege.

Initiatives such as #RaiseYourDEIQuotient awareness mailers, publications making law accessible to society at large, listening circles, etc have all created meaningful space for reflection and dialogue, within the firm, with clients, and beyond.

In a profession where the moral compass can often feel uncertain, staying true to oneself and contributing to a more inclusive and equitable legal community offers a way to make a tangible difference, even if only by a few degrees. It is a quiet, ongoing commitment to leave things better than they were found.



Saranya Mishra

Senior Associate, Corporate



Extending Inclusion Beyond the Workplace

One of the personal reasons behind my participation in any initiative and particularly engagement in DEI work - beyond the regular billable work is that it enables me foster belongingness within the larger organisation, apart from the belongingness that I share with my team colleagues.

Also, I feel that after home, our workplace is perhaps the single place where we spend a large part of our time, and it is important that as much as we take away from the organisation in terms of learning opportunities, we also give back to the organisation by helping it become a much better workplace for people across diverse backgrounds that will join the organisation in the future and take the legacy forward.

What is the most beautiful facet of being a lawyer as well as a DEI resource group member is that I can actually help the DEI team extend the concept of DEI beyond the bounds of Khaitan & Co to help foster inclusivity among clients and other organisations that I am connected with through pro bono work, helping these other organisations understand their responsibilities under the DEI-based laws and comply with them in true spirit.

I feel and I am sure my fellow DEI team members would resonate with this - that DEI is never "work" to us; at the end of the day, we are building and being a part of a community that is sensitive and kind to one's individuality. The profession of law already teaches us the principles of justice and fairness, and it is a great feeling to be able to apply it through the DEI network.



Deeksha Malik

Principal Associate, Employment, Labour & Benefits



Navigating diverse path to parenthood, caregiving and work-life balance

While I had not married to care for my mother, I always hoped to have my own progeny to pass on my values. After 14-16 rounds of IVF/IUI, I was blessed with twins at 43 making me a proud and single mother.

Over the past five years, without taking leave, I have connected over 60 clients annually across offices, executed high-value work, actively contributed to firm initiatives from DEI and corporate efficiency to file management conducted external courses and webinars, presided as speaker/chief guest at events, and published 20+ articles in mainstream media each year. Alongside, I supported my mother's pursuit of triple master's degrees, cooked daily cancer-preventive meals for my aunt for a year, and navigated medical complications, all while working through pregnancy and maternity leave.

This journey has been deeply enriching. I have learned that a rock-solid support system at home and work is vital. Surrounding oneself with well-wishers and loving what you do builds a resilient foundation. Calmness enhances efficiency. Small breaks be it like music, poetry, pets, or spiritual reflection—offer renewal. Brick by brick, dreams become reality through persistent effort and unshakeable faith.

An inclusive workplace enables individuals on diverse paths to thrive. I am deeply grateful to KCO for its unwavering support and the culture that binds each team across offices. To my Corporate and Commercial team in Delhi-NCR you are my extended family.

Hard work and faith are two sides of the same coin. When things do not go right, work harder having faith that something better is in store. Our journey on earth is a lifelong pursuit of happiness. If you have a dream/goal - protect it and do not let anyone, tell you that you cannot achieve it. Use setbacks to your advantage to strengthen your resolve.



Achint Kaur
Legal Advisor



Awards and Accolades



Top Employer for LGBT+ Inclusion | Bronze Award | India Workplace Equality Index 2024 and 2025



IFCCI HR Conclave & Awards 5.0! (Jury Special Awards)



Asian Diversity Initiative of the Year | Asia Legal Awards 2025



Bombay Chambers DEI Awards 2024 | 2nd Runners Up | Gender Equality and LGBTQIA+ Inclusion



Asia Legal Awards 2024 | Asian Diversity Initiative of the Year 2023



Gender Diversity National Firm of the Year | Women in Business Law APAC 2022



Best Diversity and Inclusion Project of the Year | Women in Law Awards 2021

A vibrant rainbow arches across the lower half of the image, its colors transitioning from red at the top to purple at the bottom. The rainbow is set against a deep blue sky filled with soft, white, wispy clouds. Below the rainbow, a dark, curved horizon line separates the sky from a dark, indistinct foreground. The overall composition is serene and hopeful.

*We welcome your feedback and suggestions for our future editions.
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