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## **Shanti Raghavan: Founder of Enable India**

She is amongst the most inspiring Indian Social Entrepreneurs, as she changed the lives of disabled persons by changing the concept of the employment sector. The journey began when her brother, Hari, lost his vision at 15 years old due to an incurable degenerative eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa. She called her brother to the USA, and she and her husband took care of him. Wholesome academically, he graduated as the top MBA student, yet in 60 interviews, his disability got him rejected despite his academic excellence. This incident deeply inspired her to tackle the systematic challenges faced by disabled people in India.

A first-class electronics engineer who began her career and later earned her Master's degree in Computer Science in the USA. Acquired corporate skills at Bell Labs and AT&T, honed leadership and management skills. She came to India in 1997 and worked for some time in GE. Later, she shifted her whole focus to helping disabled people, and along with her husband, Dipesh Sutariya, she started Enable India in 1999.

Shanti's model is pragmatic and ingenious. Rather than rest on charity-based employment, she recognized a critical gap between what the corporate sector needed and what a person with a disability was or could be trained to do. Her approach is to provide 'employability' skills-problem solving, communication and teamwork that help people not only secure a job but also succeed at it. Enable India thus prepares people for high-level positions and breaks the stereotype that disabled people are suited only for low-level jobs. She works with companies like IBM, Shell, and Britannia to provide jobs in various fields in India. By sharing her methods with other organizations, Shanti has developed a model that is easily scalable and replicable by others.

Under her leadership, over 325,000 stakeholders were reached, and 70 to 80 percent of people with disabilities now support their families. Enable India works for 19 kinds of disabilities in 1050 locations across 28 states and presently collaborates with 229 partners.

I draw much inspiration from her. She has, through her work, changed people's thinking about persons with disabilities. They are not only able to do this but can also be very contributing members of the economy and nation-building. Her untiring efforts influenced hundreds of people.

I am also disheartened by how society always undermines and discriminates against people with disabilities. All these biases never look at their potential and their capabilities.

I believe that in the years to come, Shanti Raghavan will continue to make a big difference in the way we include people with disabilities, not only in India but worldwide. Her focus on creating practical and durable solutions and her firm belief in the potential of persons with a disability hint that she is going to lead new projects, making use of state-of-the-art technology for more worthy job opportunities. As companies become more aware of the importance of diversity, Shanti will be there to help them change the way they hire. A future where companies reach out proactively to disabled professionals without intermediaries seems quite plausible. On track with her record and vision, she is all set to make Enable India, a global leader in disability inclusion for the benefit of society and the economy.