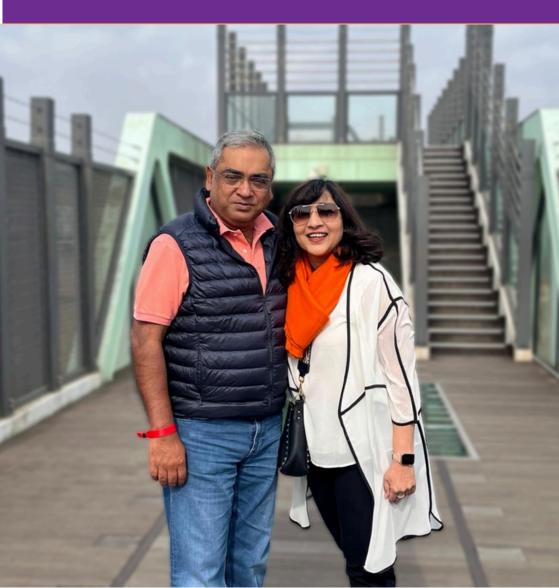# Vasvi and Ashish Bharat Ram

Building an Ecosystem for Impact

Vasvi and Ashish Bharat Ram's philanthropic journey is marked by a deep commitment to mental health, education, and women's empowerment. Continuing their family's legacy of philanthropy, but with their own pivot to a niche area, Vasvi and Ashish established the **India Mental Health Alliance** to drive systemic change and capacity-building in mental health.

➔ Early Roots of Giving

Ashish and Vasvi's drive to pursue philanthropy is anchored in the **legacy of the Shriram family**, which has been involved in philanthropic efforts since India's pre-independence era. Known for establishing highly reputed educational institutions–including Lady Shri Ram College of Women, The Shri Ram Schools, SRF Vidyalaya, their family demonstrates a **commitment to excellence and inclusive education.**

Ashish and Vasvi's philanthropic focus area is coloured by their lived experiences and struggles with navigating the mental healthcare system in India.

Key Principles of Strategic Philanthropy

Vasvi and Ashish's approach is built on five core principles:

- **Ecosystem Building:** Prioritizing collaboration, leveraging partnerships across nonprofits, civil society, governments, educational institutions, and funders to enable knowledge exchange and collective action.
- **Capacity Building:** Training stakeholders to build entrepreneurial expertise and absorb culturally resonant, evidence-based practices; but also creating a multiplier effect by involving trained experts in designing more high-quality training programs.
- **Community-Centric Approach:** Ensuring that interventions are informed by lived experiences and community voices, so they remain contextually viable, meaningful, and scalable.
- **Multi-dimensional Lens:** Recognizing the interconnectedness of areas such as mental health, education, gender, and social justice to adopt holistic interventions that cut across sectors.
- **Sustainable Impact:** Creating enduring change through multi-layered interventions that address root issues.

➔ Driving Systemic Change through Diverse Roles

Ashish, who serves as Chairperson and Managing Director of **SRF Ltd.**, has enabled **SRF Foundation's** operations in education, vocational skills & livelihoods, and natural resource management in 34 locations across 14 states in India.

Vasvi is the Joint Vice Chairperson of **The Shri Ram Schools**, the Co-Founder of **Shri Ram Millennium Schools** and **The Shri Ram Early Years** play schools, Advisory Board Member of **Shri Educare Ltd** and Board Member of **SRF Foundation**. She is on the Governing Body's of **Lady Shri Ram College for Women** and **Welham Girls School** in Dehradun. She brought her passion for women's empowerment in her past role as National President of **FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO)** in 2017-18. Deeply interested in Indian history, crafts and culture, Vasvi is also an Advisory Member of the **Sabhyata Foundation** that is committed to preserving and promoting the cultural and heritage ecosystem of India. In recognition of her contributions to education and social impact, she was honored with the esteemed **Sewa Ratan Award** by Sewa Bharti in December 2023.

➔ Giving Philosophy

Vasvi and Ashish view philanthropy as an enduring commitment that transcends mere financial contributions for immediate relief. Their approach emphasizes **strategic engagement, cross-sector dialogue, and community-driven initiatives** to **foster systemic change.**

Their giving is guided by the **TIE framework, encompassing treasure (financial resources), involvement (time, talent, and connections), and evangelization** (advocacy and influence). This deep engagement not only enhances their impact on chosen causes but also aims to inspire broader philanthropic action.

A Generational Legacy

> *Our family has been involved in philanthropy since pre-partition times, always aiming for systemic change. We believe that we have an opportunity to build on this legacy and take it forward.*

Lala Shri Ram, forefather of the Bharat Ram Family, was a well-known industrialist and philanthropist who believed that **"only education can open the doors of prosperity".** His passion for innovation and vocation-oriented education led him to found the Commercial Education Trust in 1926 (which evolved into Shri Ram College of Commerce). He was also deeply committed to women's education, and established the Lady Shri Ram College for Women in honor of **his wife, Phoolan Devi. His son, Bharat Ram, and his grandson, Arun Bharat Ram,** set up the company SRF Ltd (Shri Ram Fibres) in the early '70's.

Ashish's mother, Manju Bharat Ram, was passionate about education and established The Shri Ram Schools in 1988. She aimed to promote high-**quality education through child-centric and value-based learning**. Driven to make education accessible to underprivileged communities, she founded SRF Vidyalaya in Chennai in 1991. While education was her primary focus, she was also interested in art & culture and skilling and served as a trustee of the Blind Relief Association in Delhi to empower the visually impaired.

The Bharat Ram family's deep commitment towards education reflects a shared vision of inclusivity and purposeful impact.

India Mental Health Alliance

Making an Impact

Alliance
- **200+ members** across 31 states and Union Territories
- **300+ resources** in Knowledge Centre

Capacity Building
- **The Being and The Doing: 2800+ session sign ups** from **940+ professionals** across **130+ cities**
- **Practice Playbook Series 1: 6 sessions, 1200+ registrations** from **940+ professionals** across **130 cities**

Mental health became Vasvi and Ashish's philanthropic focal point as an underserved yet universally relevant area influencing all spheres of life. They **set up IMHA in 2023** in partnership with leading mental health organisations **Amaha and Children First** to strengthen India's mental health ecosystem and drive impact.

IMHA's model is rooted in two key aspects: **cross-sectoral collaboration** and **strengthening of capacities in communities and professionals.**

- **Alliance:** Recognising the fragmented nature of the mental health landscape, the Alliance is bringing together stakeholders to build shared knowledge and advance cross-sectoral research and collaboration dedicated to long-term, systemic change in mental health.
- **Capacity building:** IMHA is committed to working with both Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) and communities to expand the nature of care in India, adopting a preventative community-based approach that is embedded in local cultural context and lived experience. IMHA aims to do this through intensive training programmes, expert-led video series, or offerings in partnership with experts by experience.

➔ Stories of Impact

The Therapist's Compass

A **4-month flagship program** equipping early-career psychologists with practical skills and knowledge for mental health work. The inaugural cohort launched in March 2025 with 20 participants from 16 cities.

The Being and the Doing Series

IMHA's **video-based learning series** offers culturally resonant psychotherapy training to Indian practitioners, enhancing their therapeutic skills.

Practice Playbook

IMHA launched **a webinar series** in April 2025 informed by lived experience expertise: **Practice Playbook – Essential Protocols for Building an Ethical and Sustainable Mental Health Practice**. Open to mental health professionals, the fortnightly series addresses unique ethical and practical dilemmas.

IMHA's capacity building initiatives aim to bring fresh perspectives and engaging sessions to foster trust and openness.

Hamare Anubhav, Hamaari Aawaaz

A four-day **residential workshop in Dehradun**, in partnership with Burans, focused on integrating lived experience expertise into mental health programs, with participants from 10 organizations.

Series with Experts by Experience

This programme proposes to position **lived experience in mental health** as vital, applied expertise, and will use **capacity building and cross-sector dialogue** to explore its role in strengthening systems, shifting power, and enabling more humane and responsive mental health services.

Programme for Psychiatrists

This series of **masterclasses for early-career psychiatrists** will support them to build and sustain a meaningful practice, work effectively with multidisciplinary teams, and practice person-centred, contextually rooted approaches to care.

The participants of the Hamare Anubhav, Hamaari Aawaaz workshop engage in key discussions and interactive activities .

Case Study Highlights

Vasvi and Ashish's philanthropic approach emphasizes **systemic, collaborative, and community-focused interventions that drive sustainable impact.** They have spotlighted **mental health as a critical area through IMHA**, inspiring stakeholders to engage more deeply in this emerging sector. Parallely, they also exemplify a **holistic and integrative approach to philanthropy** by **linking mental health advocacy with areas like education and livelihoods**. Ultimately, through **ecosystem building and evidence-based practices**, their philanthropy helps create broader impact and underscores the **transformative potential of collective action.**

*There comes a time when an inner voice will ask you – what are you doing to make this a better place? Whether you are young or old is not the question. When the mind starts taking you down that path, then is the time to ask yourself, where can I make a difference? What am I passionate about changing? Answers will come naturally. How you take it forward can differ for everyone. It can be about giving money, giving time, creating networks and collaborations – whatever works for that individual. Our message would be – **be aware of when those voices start reverberating in your mind.***

"

India is vast, and while our efforts may be just the tip of the iceberg, every small step makes a difference. Together, we can create a lasting impact on mental health in India.

"

"Ask yourself,
where can I make a difference?"

Join the flow
Sculpt a movement. Propel Indian philanthropy forward