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# MEET THE WOMAN WHO ROSE FROM A MODEST LIFE IN KOLHAPUR TO BECOME THE GLOBAL CEO OF CHANEL NOW HONOURED BY THE BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY

Meet the woman who transformed her small-town upbringing in Kolhapur into a global legacy. From engineering classrooms to boardrooms, she carved her path with courage and ambition. Now the global CEO of Chanel, she's redefining leadership in the luxury world — and was recently recognised by the UK with its most prestigious civilian honour.

Not all fairy tales begin in castles or end in glittering ballrooms. Some start in the quiet corners of Kolhapur, Maharashtra — where dreams are often whispered, not shouted — and unfold on the grandest of global stages. Leena Nair's story is one of those rare modern epics: a woman who broke every mould, rewrote the rules of corporate leadership, and stitched her name into the history of one of the most iconic luxury fashion houses in the world — Chanel. With a career that spans over three decades, Leena isn't just a CEO — she's a movement in herself. And now, she's bagged the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) honour from Prince William — the highest civilian recognition in the UK. Let's unravel the threads of her remarkable life, shall we?



## Leena Nair's Journey: From Kolhapur to the Catwalk of Global Leadership

Born on 11 June 1969 in a traditional Hindu Malayali family in Kolhapur, Leena grew up negotiating everything — from the right to study engineering to the audacity of having a voice. Her early years weren't wrapped in privilege but in quiet perseverance. She was the first in her family to pursue higher education and often had to justify her ambition — sometimes to society, sometimes to her own parents.

Her schooling took place at Holy Cross Convent High School, and she later pursued Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering from Walchand College of Engineering in Sangli. But that was just her launchpad. In 1992, she graduated from XLRI Jamshedpur with an MBA in Human Resources — a gold medallist, no less. The journey from Kolhapur to one of India's most prestigious management schools wasn't just geographical; it was ideological.

## Leena Nair's And Kumar Nair's Love Story

In a twist that almost sounds like a Bollywood subplot, Leena had to agree to an arranged marriage to pursue her studies. Her father's condition? Study as much as you want — but get married by 23, to a man of his choosing. Leena agreed. True to his word, her father introduced her to Kumar Nair on her 23rd birthday. She had just started working as a management trainee at Hindustan Unilever. The meeting was over coffee. The decision? Taken in thirty minutes flat. "A promise is a promise," she said. And the two have now been married for three decades, raising two sons, Aryan and Sidhant.

Fun fact: Leena said yes to Kumar faster than most people order dessert. That might just be the most efficient decision in both her personal and professional life.

## The Unilever Era: Leena Nair's Masterclass in Climbing Corporate Ladders

Leena's three-decade-long stint at Unilever wasn't just a career — it was a legacy in the making. Starting off as a summer intern in 1992, she quickly rose through the ranks, eventually becoming the company's first female, Asian, and youngest Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). She wasn't just breaking glass ceilings — she was blowing them off the building.



One of her early claims to fame? Being the first woman to ever work the night shift on a Unilever factory floor. Imagine telling that to a room full of suits in 1992. It was unheard of — but then, Leena's entire journey is a collection of things “unheard of.”

Under her leadership, Unilever committed to raising its female management ratio from 38% to 50% by 2030 — a goal many considered ambitious. For Leena, it was simply necessary.

As she once said in an Instagram post reflecting on her Unilever journey, “Unilever, in so many ways, has been one of the defining relationships of my life.”

### **Chanel Calls: The Indian Maverick in Parisian Couture**

In December 2021, Leena made headlines when she was announced as the Global CEO of Chanel, becoming the first woman, the first Indian, and one of the very few non-French leaders to helm the 112-year-old fashion empire. If Coco Chanel were alive today, she'd probably raise a toast to that kind of gumption.

Once at Chanel, Leena wasted no time understanding the DNA of the brand. She visited 25 regional offices, 40 manufacturing locations, 100 points of sale, and even every creation studio. That's what one might call luxury with a side of diligence.

### **Leena Nair's Accolades, Awards and Applause (Well Deserved, Obviously)**

If Leena's wall of fame had to be built with bricks, we'd need another room. In 2017, she was named one of the Most Accomplished Indian Business Leaders in the UK by Queen Elizabeth II. In 2021, she won the Great British Businesswoman's Role Model of the Year Award. And in 2023, she cracked the 68th spot on Forbes' Most Powerful Women list.

The crown jewel? In 2025, she was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) by Prince William — a recognition reserved for individuals who've made extraordinary contributions in their field. Leena received it for services to the retail and consumer sector.



Fun fact: She's now in the same club as J.K. Rowling and Sir Paul McCartney.

### **Leena Nair Today: More Than Just a CEO**

Currently living in London, Leena isn't just the face of Chanel — she's its heartbeat. Beyond boardrooms and business metrics, she's become a symbol of what's possible when grit meets grace. From walking the dusty streets of Kolhapur to sitting at the helm of a multi-crore empire, her story reads like an ode to tenacity.

And while she may be draped in Chanel now, she carries Kolhapur in her heart like the finest embroidery — intricate, bold, and impossible to ignore.



**Suresh Iyer**  
(Electric Guitar)



**Santosh Bhutal**  
(Multi Percussionist)

Shailaja nair foundation  
Presents  
*Teri Yaad Mein*

by  
Pratap's **Amazing Musicians**  
held on 24th June, 2025  
at **Mukti Cultural Hub,**





Shailaja Nair Puraskar for best woman employee



# RATH YATRA 2025: WHO IS LORD JAGANNATH, THE ETERNAL LORD OF THE UNIVERSE?

The annual Jagannath Rath Yatra, will begin on June 27. The Rath Yatra is one of the most important festivals for Hindus, celebrating Lord Jagannath's annual journey to the Gundicha Temple.



Also known as the Chariot Festival, the idols of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra, and sister Subhadra are carried on a chariot, and this is the only time that the deities leave the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha. For the unversed, the temple of Jagannath Puri was built by Ananta Barma Chodaganga Dev during the 12th century A.D. and was completed by Ananga Bhima Dev. This temple is one of the tallest monuments in the country.

Jagannath Mahaprabhu: The Supreme Being Lord Jagannath is considered an avatar of Lord Vishnu and is also compared to Lord Krishna. The divine form of Lord Jagannath is described in the Skanda Purana and Brahma Purana. According to the website of Shree Jagannatha Temple, Puri: "Lord Jagannatha, as His very name signifies, is the Lord of the Universe (Jagat = Universe; Natha Lord). He is also popularly known as Mahaprabhu (Maha - Great; Prabhu = Lord). The sacred scriptures of Sanatana Vaidika Dharma (popularly known as Hinduism) also refer to Him

as Purushottama, The Supreme Divine Being (Purusha = Divine Being; Uttama = Supreme)."

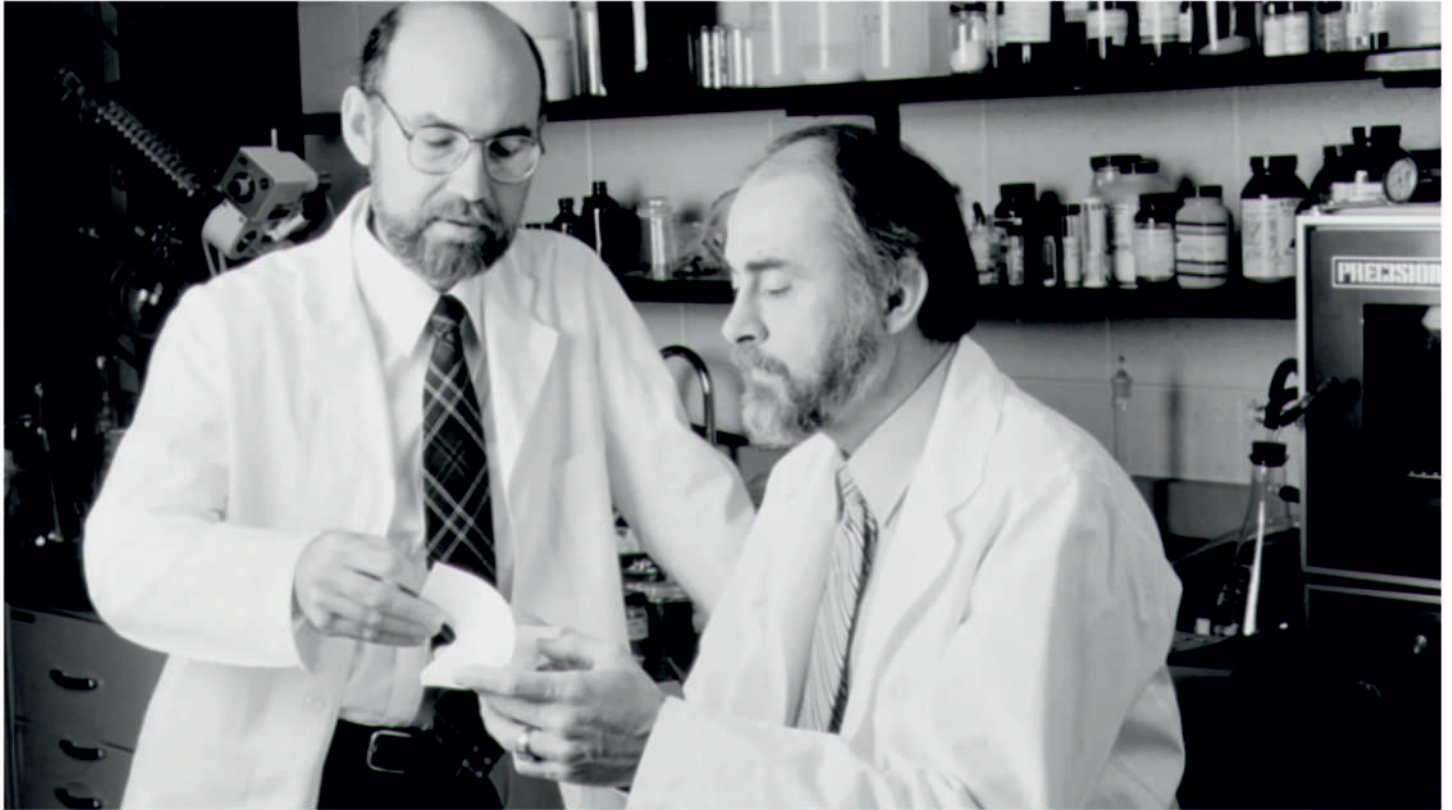


The Skanda Purana and Brahma Purana are among the scriptures in which the divine form of Lord Jagannath is described. The website of Shree Jagannatha Temple, Puri also states that in the 28th Chapter of Skanda-Purana Purushottamakshetra Mahatmya, Lord Brahma Himself reveals the true identity of Lord Shree Jagannatha when He instructs King Indradyumna with these words: Thinking it is a wooden image, O pre-eminent King, let there not be the idea in you that this is a mere image: this is verily the form of Supreme Brahman (Supreme Omnipresent God). As Param-Brahman takes away all sorrows and confers eternal bliss, He is known as Daru. According to the four Vedas therefore, the Lord is manifest in the form of Daru (sacred wood). He is the Creator of the entire Universe. He has also created Himself.

Another legend states that Lord Jagannath was worshipped as Neela Madhab by a Savar king (tribal chief) named Viswvasu. Dina Krishna Joshi writes for the website of the Odisha Government and states: "Although scholars differ on the origin and evolution of Lord Jagannath, all of them agree that Lord Jagannath is basically a tribal deity from legendary as well as from historical evidences. According to some, this evolution has started with the appearance of the primitive man and has undergone the process of evolution till ultimately worshipped as Rastra Devata, Jagannath. From legendary point, it can be stated clearly that Biswabasu belonged to the Savara tribe, who worshipped the Lord Jagannath."

# APPRECIATION IGNITES INNOVATION:

## The Story of 3M's Post-it Notes.



This story started back in 1968 when a guy named Spencer Silver worked at 3M as a scientist. He was trying to make a super-strong glue, but he accidentally made something different – a glue that stuck lightly to things and could be easily removed without leaving any mess behind.

At first, this discovery didn't seem useful at all. It was like a solution to a problem that nobody had. But Spencer didn't give up. He saw a chance where others saw a mistake.

Spencer told his co-worker, Art Fry, about this strange glue during one of his talks. Art was a singer in a choir, and he had a little problem. His bookmarks kept falling out of his hymnal book during church. It was a small annoyance, but it bothered him.

Art realized that Spencer's not-so-strong glue could solve his problem. He imagined making bookmarks that could stick to the pages but also be taken off and put back easily. This simple idea was the start of something big.

Spencer and Art worked together to make this idea even better. Soon, they had a prototype of what we now know as Post-it Notes. They used scrap paper from 3M's lab and added Spencer's special glue.

Then came an important part of the story. 3M had a tradition where employees could share their cool ideas with the company's leaders. Art and Spencer used this chance to show their invention.

During the presentation, Art showed how Post-it Notes worked, and the bosses were interested. But what really made the difference was that their co-workers and bosses appreciated what they had done. They got the support and help they needed to make and sell their new product.

### The big lesson

We often turn to teamwork stories to understand the dynamics of successful groups. So, the story of Post-it Notes at 3M shows that giving credit is powerful. It proves that just by recognizing your co-workers efforts, you can create something amazing that changes how we do things. In this case, a small problem turned into a product that's worth billions, all because one person's idea was appreciated.

# WORLD'S OLDEST HOTEL, MANAGED BY SAME FAMILY FOR 52 GENERATIONS, ITS NAME IS., LOCATED IN.



Do you know that the oldest hotel in the world is about 1,400 years old? Located in Japan, Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan was established in the year 705 by Fujiwara Moito. Surprisingly, it is managed by 52 generations of the same Moito family.

Guinness World Records also recognised Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan as the oldest continuously running hotel in the world.

The Moito family has been an expert in the hospitality industry. To compete with the modern hotels, Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan has undergone a lot of modernisations in recent years. Even after these changes, the hotel maintains its tradition. Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan' is just a short distance from Mount Fuji. People from not only Japan but also the whole world come to see this hotel.

## **Main Attraction of Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan**

The hotel is popular for its natural hot springs and scenic beauty. Its history attracts a diverse clientele, from samurai to modern celebrities and politicians, all drawn to its healing Waters. A unique feature is the "Mochatine no Yu" bath, fed directly by the springs, with guests also consuming the spring water. This direct access to the source distinguishes Keunkan from other hotels.

How Many Rooms Does the Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan Have?

He hotel has 37 rooms that are decorated in traditional Japanese style. To stay here of a night a person has to pay 408 dollars (approx RS 35 000). For room booking, people can visit the official website of Nishiyama Onsen Kunken. Nishiyama Onsen Keiynan is located in the foothills of Akaishi Mountains. People can take an open-air bath open battle enjoying the hilly view. This 14th-century resort, renovated in 1997 and periodically updated since, boasts a picturesque setting. A river flows along one side, while a dense forest provides a stunning view from every guest room.

Fujiwara Moito's 52nd generation manages a highly regarded resort, attracting international visitors with its exceptional hospitality and prime location. The resort maintains its historical integrity despite ongoing developments.



Anisa Murugesan



FEI Family members in Corporate Accounts

Hareesh Kumar



Deepali Kajrolkar



Mamata Pendurkar



Prashant Kawade



Prerna More



Puja Mhaskar



Rakesh Pandey



Rohan Zagade



Shamal Joshi



Shankar Swami



Shashikala Kale



Shraddha Dhas



Smita Pillai



Uday Marchande



# CELEBRATIONS FOR THE MONTH

## BIRTHDAYS

01st	Gajraj Singh	Delhi
02nd	Raviraj Sinh Jadeja	Baroda
03rd	Narendra Singh	Delhi
04th	Smitha Venugopal	Intl. Division
04th	Hepzi Miracklin A	Tuticorin
05th	Shri Krishan Sharma	Delhi
09th	Ponselvam S	Tuticorin
11th	Rakshitha S	Bangalore
11th	Shreya Mordekar	Intl. Division
13th	Avijit Ghosh	Kolkata
13th	Mallesh Enuga	Hyderabad
20th	Pranav Nighot	Mumbai
20th	Manesh Kumar A	Bangalore
22nd	Rohan Zagade	Corporate
23rd	Rahul Kharpade	Mumbai
24th	Siddaraja	Bangalore
25th	Akshay Bhise	Pune
25th	Omkar Dhaval	Intl. Division
27th	Madhu Nambiar	Mumbai
29th	Malobika Banerjee	Kolkata
30th	Hemant Chaudhary	Ahmedabad
31st	Midhun Mathew Prasad	Bangalore

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

04th	Ponselvam S	Tuticorin
09th	Shankar Swami	Corporate
13th	Sachin Mali	Bangalore
15th	Shashikala Kale	Corporate
16th	M. Theva Anand Rajesh	Tuticorin

## NEW ADDITIONS TO THE FEI FAMILY

Sandip Parmar	Ahmedabad
Jayesh More	Corporate
Prerna More	Corporate
Pratibha Verma	Delhi
Reshma P V	Delhi
Chandni Nihalani Kumar	Intl. Division
Manisha Suryawanshi	Intl. Division
Sumit Chauhan	Intl. Division
Vineeta Ohol	Intl. Division
Amit Sharma	Mumbai
Mandar Chavan	Mumbai
Sonam Diver	Mumbai
Vaibhav Bhoir	Mumbai
Uday Sequeira	Mumbai



The corporate office had the pleasure of hosting some of our colleagues from the branches, who had come to attend the **Founders day event** in Mumbai. We had representatives from Ahmedabad, Baroda, Chennai, Delhi, Gandhidham and Kochi.

## HOLIDAYS FOR THE MONTH

Date	Purpose
12th (Saturday)	Second Saturday

PAN INDIA CLOSED