

As Women's Day approaches on 8th March, **Shampi Venkatesh**, *chief people officer, NIIT Limited* sets the record straight on all the little discussed issues about women - chauvinism, reservations and mindsets

## “Reservations are not going to fix the problem. They are only a starting point”



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### **WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON RESERVATIONS FOR WOMEN; FROM THE CLAUSE IN THE COMPANIES ACT TO RESERVATIONS IN BUSES AND TRAINS?**

Unfortunately, as a society, we have internalised for too long now that women and men are expected to do clearly differentiated things. To break away from that notion, a certain level of legal reform is required. Reservations are not going to fix the problem. They are simply a starting point. The greater issue lies in transforming existing attitudes. Organisationally, I think middle and

top-level managers need to realise that growth and results cannot be compromised in the name of diversity and inclusion. In an ideal world, there wouldn't be a need for reservations because gender wouldn't be of primary importance.

### **DO YOU THINK THAT THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REVOLUTION WILL HELP INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE?**

Flexible work hours cannot and should not be the only way to attract a greater participation of women in the workforce. It is a perk, an advantage that can be given in exceptional/emergency circumstances and that needs to be communicated adequately enough. Obviously, if you are unable to come into office on a particular day, those very reasons will also affect your productivity from home, whatever they may be. Of course, there are hours of unproductivity that you experience in

office as well. But you are still in a fairly stimulated environment to think and work; versus being at home where there are always going to be other domestic duties.

### **IF A WOMAN IS FACED WITH A CHAUVINISTIC MANAGER OR COLLEAGUE IN AN OTHERWISE FAIR ORGANISATION, HOW CAN SHE ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION?**

Ideally, handle it yourself. Make it known to the concerned colleague that the displayed attitude is not appreciated. The courage to do that obviously needs to come from self-confidence and belief in herself as a professional. If that doesn't help, then report it to the HR manager with concrete evidence of chauvinistic behaviour. Managers need to treat these issues with a consistent and zero tolerant response. Sensitisation workshops and sessions, on a regular basis, should be conducted for employees.