

# Nailesh Kanaksi Khimji



**DOB:** September 24, 1971

**Marital status:** Married with children

**Education:**  
1993 - Bachelor of Arts, Management,  
Webster University, Geneva, Switzerland

**Spoken Languages:** Arabic, English, French  
& Hindi

**Interests & Hobbies:** Travel, Scuba-diving,  
Yachting, Skiing, Hiking, Trekking

**Sector:** Diversified

**Ownership:** Private

**Established in:** 1870

## Director, Khimji Ramdas

The Khimji family is well known in Oman. And with his passion for business strategy, social work and community development, Nailesh Khimji, being the 5th generation, is one of the key members of the current generation that is continuing its legacy.

After studying business management in Switzerland and going through an internship at Procter & Gamble, Mr. Khimji came back to the Middle East to join the family business, the Khimji Ramdas Group. Growing up in such a family had already taught him a lot about entrepreneurship and how a business is run ever since he was a child, but the corporate experience he gained at Procter & Gamble helped him get a different perspective, which impacted his own business decisions later on.

Mr. Khimji began his journey in the marketing department of Strategic Foods, a biscuit manufacturing unit that the group established in Dubai, and went on to become its CEO in 2000, when the company was already exporting goods to 70 countries. In 2007, he moved back to Oman in order to serve on the board of directors of the group, overseeing the operations of the consumer products area of the business.

The most significant contribution that Nailesh Khimji brought to the group was the initiative to change the way the business is operated. For a long time, every little detail was managed by Khimji family members, which left little to no time for them to take on other projects or think about the bigger picture. But in 1999, the organization was restructured, and every subsidiary of the business started being run by a professional CEO that was not part of the family - just like any other corporation in the world.

As a member of the board, not being involved in the day to day business activities allowed Mr. Khimji to plan better strategies. These initially included expanding internationally, and the first target market was India. Meanwhile, Mr. Khimji moved from consumer products to the luxury and lifestyle area of the group, and got the opportunity to start distributing the Rolex brand in India.

Nailesh Khimji is also the founder of Eshraqa, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm of

Khimji Ramdas, which focuses on making a change in people's lives through its three key pillars: education, health, and community well-being. Eshraqa's goals are to develop the Omani community, inspire Omani youth, and empower Omani women by providing access to training, technology, and better facilities for an increased quality of life.

Khimji Ramdas has been involved in various CSR initiatives ever since it was established. One of the organization's main projects at the moment is helping develop Oman's villages or wilayats. While the government is making good efforts to improve the infrastructure in all parts of Oman, it is not able to deal with every single detail, and this is where Eshraqa comes in and makes sure that people in these communities have everything they need in terms of healthcare, education, and other services.

Interestingly, the work that Eshraqa has done has really changed the way the community views large companies. However, Mr. Khimji wishes that other companies would engage in the same kind of work, so that covering the entire area of Oman would take less time and everyone could benefit from the improvements sooner. So far, the feedback from the wilayats has been positive, which only motivates Eshraqa to keep going.

*"We have an unwritten rule that health and education are something that we will never invest in for profit,"* points out Mr. Khimji. Even if one of their projects ends up making a profit, all of it is reinvested in other CSR initiatives. One of the examples is Muscat University, where Khimji Ramdas was one of the main funders - all the money it makes is reinvested into the university's growth.

The organization has partnerships with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Sports, and Riyada, the public authority for SME development, among others.

Mr. Khimji believes that entrepreneurship is a topic and a skill that needs to be taught in school from a very early age, rather than being studied only in university. Also, he thinks that learning a craft through vocational training after high school should be an option for every young Omani in order for them to be able to start working and earning from the age of 18. He can't stress the point enough that everyone going to university and then looking for a public sector job is not a sustainable model for the long term.

Aside from its planned projects, Eshraqa also helps members of the community whenever the need arises. Mr. Khimji explains that when people are in need of

### My message to youth:

Be entrepreneurial, start a business, and look outside of Oman for your market, not only inside Oman. Take advantage of technology to expand globally.

### My message about Oman:

Oman is very attractive to the international market because of its geographical location. If anyone is looking to do business in the Middle East and needs access to the sea as in terms of its supply chain, Oman is a very attractive country given the geographical advantage.



medical equipment, supplies, or other items, the team at Eshraqa uses the group's widespread network to source these items more easily and cheaply, and then donate them, rather than just giving people money to buy the items themselves.

Nailesh Khimji has big plans for 2020, as it's a very important year for Oman as well as for the group. While His Majesty Sultan Qaboos will celebrate his 50th year as a ruler and his 80th birthday, Khimji Ramdas will celebrate its 150th anniversary. To rise to the occasion, Mr. Khimji and his team have decided to double the work that Eshraqa is now doing during the entire year. Outside of his active involvement in the group's operations and CSR activities, Mr. Khimji also serves on the board of the Omani-Italian Friendship Association, as well as on the board of the Omani-French Friendship Association. All the experience he gained up to this point has given him a global perspective on business, and his goal is to help the Omani economy as much as possible through exploring new regional opportunities. At the same time, helping his community is what drives Nailesh Khimji to fight for a better future for Oman.

## Affiliations, Awards & Honors

OFA: Omani French Friendship Association; Young Presidents organization (YPO); Omani-Italian Friendship Association (TOIFA); Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie Geneva, Switzerland (FHH); Association Internationale des Anciens Roséens (AIAR); Multiple Awards for works done through Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas CSR Arm.