

## Ratnaboli Ray



**Ratnaboli Ray** is an **Ashoka Fellow**, trained clinical psychologist and mental health activist who is the founder of Anjali, rights based organisation based in Kolkata, West Bengal, which works for persons with mental health condition and or psychosocial disability. She is the former student of **Gokhale Memorial Girls' College**. She was awarded the Human Rights watch's Alison Den Forges Award for Extraordinary Activism. She has been recognised as powerful impact woman by Business Today. She was awarded Times Woman Hero by Times of India.

For more than two decades, Ratnaboli Ray has been a leading advocate for the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities (mental health conditions) in India, thousands of who are confined to government institutions where they often endure abuse behind closed doors. . Ray, who has faced stigma, discrimination, and threats due to her own mental health condition, is working to change that.

Born into a family of committed social activists, Ray worked with marginalized communities in Kolkata and West Bengal. After she had a breakdown in 1997, her employer forced her to resign. She has used her personal experience, including wrongfully being locked up in a mental hospital by union organizers trying to intimidate her, to push for a paradigm shift in government mental health institutions. In 2000, Ray founded Anjali , a small nongovernmental organization that provides skills training to people with psychosocial disabilities living in government institutions. Anjali has gained wide recognition for its innovative strategies for systemic change, including successfully challenging the use of solitary confinement and electroshock therapy without consent in West Bengal. Ratna's courage and persistence to de-stigmatize mental health is an inspiration to me and countless people with psychosocial disabilities invisible across India. Additionally, Ray co-founded a national alliance for access to justice for people with mental health conditions. Ray and her organization are key partners for Human Rights Watch in our work on the rights of women and girls with disabilities in India. During the course of her career, she has faced considerable resistance and opposition due to the severe stigma that surrounds psychosocial disabilities in India, and yet continues her work underrated.