

CONFERENCE



Chintan
Research
Foundation



SASHAKT NARI, VIKSIT BHARAT

Women-Led
Development @2047

26 February 2026 | 10 am Onwards | Hyatt Regency, New Delhi



ABOUT CHINTAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) is an emerging independent think tank dedicated to shaping policy through rigorous research and thought leadership. With a strong focus on fostering collaboration between policymakers and industry, CRF integrates practical insights into its research and advocacy efforts. It conducts comprehensive research to support informed decision-making and engages with stakeholders through discussions, events, and publications. CRF's research is focused on three core areas – Climate Change & Energy Transition, Economy & Trade, and Geopolitics & Strategic Studies.

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SASHAKT NARI, VIKSIT BHARAT CONFERENCE 2026

WOMEN LED DEVELOPMENT@2047

BACKGROUND NOTE

In the past decade, the Indian government have been taking several initiatives to empower women, in the country from the Prime Minister's vision of women-led development to breaking down barriers through various initiatives, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity, and Digital India Programmes. Through these initiatives, India has shown commitment to women economic empowerment which reflects the government's strategic approach towards development of the women, by the women and for the women. The initiatives and programmes focus at providing access to education, employment, finance, and technology, thereby, investing in the Nari Shakti, the power of women to drive economic and social transformation.

While much progress has been achieved which is visible through successful stories of women leading key businesses, breaking stereotypes, contributing to sustainable livelihood and economy, women's economic participation remains hampered by socio-economic barriers. As Simone de Beauvoir profoundly asserted, "one is not born a woman, but becomes one," highlighting the social construction of womanhood, shaped by cultural, historical, and social factors. In India, these factors are deeply intertwined with systems of patriarchy, hierarchy and power, thereby access to resources and opportunities, affecting power dynamics, as well as cultural narratives.

Only 30% women participate through the labour force to the economy (NSSO, MoSPI, 2024). Much of their labour, both within and outside the home, goes unseen and undervalued. Though participation has increased across sectors, from agriculture to services sector, their contribution accounts to only 18% of the country's GDP which is one of the lowest proportions in the world. Furthermore, the rise of women entrepreneurs in the self-employment sector, has gained significant governmental and societal support. From Self-Help Groups and producer collectives to women-led start-ups in manufacturing, services and the digital economy, new entrepreneurial models are beginning to challenge traditional value chains and expand women's economic agency. By acknowledging the breadth and depth of women's economic engagement, we can move towards achieving the goal of equitable and inclusive Viksit Bharat by 2047.

However, the economic position of women is shaped by the social construction, which is further complicated by India's rich cultural history and diverse social structures, including caste, class, and ethnicity, which play a crucial role in shaping norms and expectations. For instance, the Khasi tribe in Meghalaya practices matrilineal inheritance, where property and social status are passed down through generations of women, contrasting sharply with the patriarchal norms prevalent in many other parts of the country. But here also the role of brother and husband is important. Such variation illustrates how women's access to law, justice and state or customary institutions is mediated by identity, and how these

institutions can both enable and constrain women's claims to land, finance, bodily autonomy and public office. Additionally, limited access to education and healthcare persists and issues such as violence against women continue, therefore, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of equitable justice in India.

These layered inequalities do not exist in isolation; they are amplified when societies face environmental and political shocks. Women in India stand at the frontlines of climate change, conflict and displacement. In such situations, they are often the primary targets who face the brunt of each of these calamities through loss of livelihoods, heightened insecurity, increased care burdens and greater exposure to violence.

This conference aims to provide a platform for comprehensive and interdisciplinary discussions on the position and perception of women through an Indian perspective. Rather than merely diagnosing problems, it seeks to explore measurable impacts and propose actionable solutions that can foster transformative change. The conference shall bring forth the unprecedented and exceptional examples from India of women-led development in bringing women in positions of economic independence and growth and increased political power.

By engaging with experts and changemakers in the sphere of gender equality, empowerment and development the discussions shall endeavor to create a multifaceted conversation around the concerns that faced, at an application level, in efforts towards equal opportunity. Drawing on insights from sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science, the event shall work towards providing a platform for policymakers, scholars, and activists to navigate the intricate and evolving landscape of the stature and power of women in India, their increased presence in positions of power and steps towards higher political involvement.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the event is to contribute meaningfully to the evolving discourse on women's development and women-led development in India by adopting an interdisciplinary and solution-oriented approach. The panel discussions and speeches will be curated to create a nuanced conversation around women development and women-led development, recognizing that experiences of inequality are shaped by multiple factors. Further, the panels will focus on assessing the impacts of these disparities and exploring innovative, and evidence-based interventions. This approach aims to move beyond theoretical discussions and towards pragmatic and actionable strategies that lead to tangible outcomes in promoting equality. The event shall have panel discussions focusing on the key aspects of economic equality, entrepreneurship, political participation, law and defence, diplomacy and media representation.

PROGRAMME AGENDA

Schedule	Particulars
09:30 - 10:00 AM	Registration & Networking
10:00 - 10:10 AM	Opening Remarks Shishir Priyadarshi , <i>President, CRF</i>
10:10 - 10:25 AM	Keynote Address Dr. Priti Adani , <i>Chairperson, Adani Foundation</i>
10:25 - 10:40 AM	Special Address by Chief Guest Smt Annpurna Devi , <i>Minister for WCD, Govt of India</i>
10:40 AM Onwards	Book Launch " Sashakt Nari, Viksit Bharat Women-Led Development @ 2047 "
11:00 - 11:45 AM	Enterprise, Equity, Empowerment: Women Driving Growth Dr. Abhishek Lakhtakia , <i>CEO, Adani Foundation</i> Dr. Archana Bhatnagar , <i>MD, Haylide Chemicals & President MAWE</i> Pallavi Joshi Bakhru , <i>Sr. Partner & Leader- Family Office, GT</i> Nidarshana Gowani , <i>MD, Kamala Group</i> Shirley Daniel , <i>Founder & CEO, Atna.AI Pte Ltd</i> Sita Pallacholla , <i>CEO, WE Hub</i> Moderator: Gargi Rawat , <i>Senior Anchor, NDTV</i>
11:45 - 12:15 PM	Fireside Chat: Nurturing the economy : Unpaid Care Work at Homes Dr. Shamika Ravi , <i>Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and</i> Amb. Veena Sikri , <i>Founding Trustee and Convenor of SWAN</i> <i>In conversation with</i> Dr. Cchavi Vasisht , <i>Associate Fellow, CRF</i>
12:15 - 01:00 PM	Breaking Lines of Control and Patriarchy: Law and Defence Justice Hima Kohli , <i>Former Judge, Supreme Court of India</i> Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal , <i>High Court of Delhi</i> Dipti Mohil Chawla , <i>Additional Secretary, MoD</i> Gitanjali Singh , <i>Wing Commander (Retd.)</i> Gathi Prakash , <i>Partner, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas</i> Moderator: Devna Arora , <i>Deputy Head (South Asia) at SIAC</i>
01:00 - 02:00 PM	Networking Lunch Break
02:00 - 02:45 PM	Daughters of the Soil: Voices from Rural India Sonalben Naran Goyal , <i>Founder, Sri Gopal Gir Gaushala</i> Pushpalata Krushna Gautam , <i>Sarpanch, Alezari Village, Tirora, Maharashtra</i> Kailashben Rajubhai Patel , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Dakshaben Keshavbhai Chaudhary , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Suman Vijay Parab , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Jyoti Pradip Deshmukh , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Suraja TK , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Anita Maran , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Avula Kumari , <i>Rural Entrepreneur</i> Moderator: Subodh Singh , <i>CSR Head, Mumbai, Adani Foundation</i>

Schedule	Particulars
02:45 - 03:15 PM	Fireside Chat: Listen to Her Nandita Das , Actor, Director, Writer, Producer and Social Advocate <i>In conversation with Shishir Priyadarshi, President CRF</i>
03:15 - 04:00 PM	Bearing the Brunt, Driving the Solutions: Women and Climate Action Prakriti Srivastava , IFS, former PCCF of Kerala Dr. Sonali Ghosh , Field Director, Kaziranga National Park Aarushi Nishank , National Convener, Sparsh Ganga Foundation Ruchi Kashyap , Executive Trustee and CEO, Atmashakti Trust Anju Bisht , MD, Saukhyam Reusable Pads Moderator: Gargi Rawat , Senior Anchor, NDTV
04:00 - 04:45 PM	Women Redefining Indian Leadership and Governance Kalyani Raj , Patron in AIWC Chhavi Rajawat , Former Sarpanch Venu Dhingra , Author and Social activist Bhakti Sharma , National Executive Member, Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha Moderator: Sikta Deo , Senior Anchor, NDTV
04:45 - 05:30 PM	Fireside Chat: Diplomacy Through Her Lens: Women Leading Global Engagement HE Diana Mickevičienė , Ambassador of Lithuania to India HE Mahishini Colonne , Ambassador of Sri Lanka to India HE Mary M. Mutuku , Deputy Head of Mission, Kenya to India HE Marje Luup , Ambassador of Estonia to India <i>In conversation with Shishir Priyadarshi, President, CRF</i>
05:30 - 06:00 PM	Changing the Script: Women, Media, and Cultural Power Chhaya Sharma , IG, Bureau of Police Research & Development Antara Lahiri , Film Editor Sheela Bhatt , Senior Political Journalist Archana Borhade , Director, Producer, Screenwriter, Cinematographer Moderator: Joyeeta Basu , Editor, The Sunday Gaurdian
06:00 - 06:30 PM	High Tea
06:30 - 07:30 PM	Cultural Programme
07:30 - 07:45 PM	Keynote Address Smt. Rekha Gupta , Chief Minister, NCT of Delhi
07:45 - 08:00 PM	Vote of Thanks
08:00 PM Onwards	Networking Dinner

SPEAKER PROFILES

INAUGURAL SESSION



SMT ANNPURNA DEVI
Minister for WCD, Govt of India

Born 2 February 1970, Smt. Annpurna Devi served terms in the Bihar Legislative Assembly (1998, 2000, 2005). She was Minister of State for Mines and Geology, Government of Bihar (2000), and Cabinet Minister in Jharkhand for Irrigation, Women and Child Welfare, and Registration (2012–2014). Elected to the 17th Lok Sabha in May 2019, she also became Union Minister of State, Ministry of Education from 7 July 2021, and chaired the committee revising the Right to Education Act under the National Education Policy 2020. In the 2024 General Elections, she was re-elected from the Koderma constituency. She chaired Jharkhand Assembly's Committee on Women and Child Welfare (2005–2009) and was a member of the Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Industry (13 Sep 2019–7 Jul 2021), the Committee on Empowerment of Women, and consultative committees for Power and New and Renewable Energy. A Ranchi University postgraduate, she hails from Kariyabar village, Koderma, Jharkhand.



SMT. REKHA GUPTA
Chief Minister, NCT of Delhi

Rekha Gupta is the 9th Chief Minister of Delhi, a historic appointment that marks the Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power in the national capital after nearly three decades. Her leadership reflects over 30 years of dedicated public service and political engagement at grassroots, municipal and state levels. As Chief Minister, Ms. Gupta champions inclusive governance rooted in integrity, accountability and measurable outcomes. Her development agenda prioritises improved healthcare, quality education, equitable opportunities and strengthened urban infrastructure, with a clear focus on translating policy into impactful action. Born on 19 July 1974 in Julana, Jind district of Haryana, Ms. Gupta relocated to Delhi in early childhood and was raised in Pitampura. This early immersion in the city's social dynamics shaped her deep understanding of urban aspirations and challenges. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi, and an LLB from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, equipping her with analytical and legal insights that inform her approach to governance and public administration.



DR. PRITI ADANI
Chairperson, Adani Foundation

Dr Priti G Adani is the Chairperson of the Adani Foundation — one of Asia’s leading nonprofit philanthropic institutions with an INR 60,000 crore commitment and over INR 800 crore annual outlay. Dr Adani has been at the helm of transformative social impact initiatives since 1996 when she chose to forgo a career in medicine and dedicate herself to social service. What began as a modest welfare initiative in just a few villages has since evolved into a powerful national movement, with the Adani Foundation now impacting 9.6 million people annually in more than 7,000 villages and 9 urban centers. Along with her commitment to sustainable development, Dr. Adani is a firm believer in the power of education as a catalyst for nation-building. She serves as the President of the Adani University and has been instrumental in driving exponential growth and development across the Adani University and Adani Institute of Digital Technology Management (AIDTM). Her visionary leadership also extends to other reputable institutions, where she serves as a member of the Board. Dr Adani, a medical professional by qualification, was conferred honorary doctorate by the Gujarat Law Society University in 2020, and by Maharashtra’s Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research in 2025 for her outstanding contributions to education and philanthropy.



SHISHIR PRIYADARSHI
President, CRF

Shishir Priyadarshi is a former Director of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). With over 22 years of working closely with global institutions, his area of interests focuses on international economic policies, infrastructure development, and trade regulations. He was responsible for all work related to developing countries, including in the context of trade negotiations, capacity building, and the special and differential treatment provided to them. Before his international role, Mr Priyadarshi served for over 20 years in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), holding senior positions at both the state and central levels. His experience includes work in various ministries related to the economic, finance, and industry sectors, as well as supporting inter-ministerial coordination at the Cabinet Secretariat.

SESSION 1: ENTERPRISE, EQUITY, EMPOWERMENT: WOMEN DRIVING GROWTH

The landscape of women's entrepreneurship in India is undergoing a transformative shift, increasingly celebrated as an engine for innovation, economic growth, and social empowerment. However, the lived realities of women reveal a persistent duality, shaped by deeply gendered economic, social, and institutional structures. This panel explores the complex trajectories of women entrepreneurs in India, ranging from the overwhelming majority who manage low capital, home based, and feminised enterprises that prioritise flexibility, to the smaller, growing cohort successfully building high growth, digitally enabled businesses.

The discussion will unpack the structural push and pull factors dictating these paths, including critical barriers such as the unequal burden of unpaid care work, limited asset ownership, restricted mobility, and systemic biases in formal finance. By examining these intersecting challenges, our goal is to move the conversation from mere inclusion and participation metrics toward genuine structural transformation. Together, we will discuss actionable strategies to redistribute care work, enhance market linkages, and redesign financial systems, ensuring women from all backgrounds can actively drive India towards the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.



**DR. ABHISHEK
LAKHTAKIA**

CEO Adani Foundation

Dr. Abhishek Lakhtakia, who holds a Doctorate in Public Administration, brings 25 years of extensive experience in the development and CSR sectors. Before his tenure as CEO of the Adani Foundation, he held pivotal leadership roles at prominent organisations, including JSW Foundation, E&Y, Reliance Foundation, ICICI Foundation, CRY, and CHILDLINE India Foundation. Throughout his career, Dr Lakhtakia has provided strategic direction for diverse development programs. He excels at conceptualising innovative initiatives, strengthening compliance and monitoring systems, and guiding organisational restructuring. Additionally, he has successfully navigated complex operations, managed senior board relations, and forged critical partnerships with government and international bodies.



**DR. ARCHANA
BHATNAGAR**

MD, Haylide Chemicals Pvt.
Ltd. & Chairperson & Founder
President of MAWE

Dr. Archana Bhatnagar is a first-generation entrepreneur, Managing Director of Haylide Chemicals Pvt. Ltd. & Chairperson & Founder President of the Madhya Pradesh Association of Women Entrepreneurs (MAWE). With over three decades of leadership, through MAWE, she has empowered women, especially from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns—by enabling, their financial independence enterprise creation, global exposure, and policy advocacy. Awarded for her exceptional entrepreneurship, recognised for her presentation power, speaking & contribution at international forums, like WTO Geneva, UN General Assembly New York, World Export Development Forums, Commonwealth etc, makes her an exceptional leader of Gender & Trade.



**PALLAVI JOSHI
BAKHRU**

Sr. Partner & Leader- Family
Office, Grant Thornton Bharat
LLP

Pallavi Joshi Bakhru leads the Family Office and Private Client Services practice at Grant Thornton Bharat (GTB), bringing over 3 decades of expertise in corporate tax, litigation, international arbitration under BIT, tax structuring, and regulatory matters under FEMA. At Grant Thornton, she works closely with promoters, family offices, and HNIs on critical aspects of business such as restructuring, tax efficiency, succession planning, governance frameworks, and mentoring NextGen leaders. She is a Chartered Accountant and a fellow member of the ICAI- with 34 years of experience. Pallavi sits on the Partnership Board of GTB and serves as an Independent Director on the boards of leading companies such as Vedanta Limited, Hindustan Zinc Limited, Gabriel India Limited, and Neuland Laboratories Limited.



NIDARSHANA GOWANI

MD, Kamala Group

Smt. Nidarshana Gowani is the Managing Director of the Kamala Group of Companies and the Founder and Trustee of the Kamala Ankibai Ghamandiram Gowani Trust. Originally from Indore and now residing in Mumbai, she hails from a distinguished lineage of Indian independence activists, being the great-granddaughter of Padma Bhushan Shri Kunjilal Dubey and Shri Suman Verma. Notably named by acclaimed Hindi poet Bhavani Prasad Mishra and born to entrepreneurial parents, her life blends heritage with leadership.



SITA PALLACHOLLA

CEO - Women
Entrepreneurs Hub

Sita Pallacholla is the CEO of Women Entrepreneur (WE) Hub, India's first state-led organisation supporting women entrepreneurs. A technologist, founder, and investment specialist with two decades of experience, she expertly bridges the worlds of policy, capital, and innovation. The WE Hub operates across Telangana as both a policy think-tank and a robust implementation engine. By partnering with government bodies, the programs led by her aim to reach 7.5 million self-help group women, fostering financial independence and enterprise creation. Her inclusive work, empowering everyone from rural innovators to urban founders, earned WE Hub recognition in the 2024–25 Economic Survey of India as a scalable model for women-led entrepreneurship.



SHIRLEY DANIEL

Founder & CEO, Atna.AI

As Founder and CEO of Atna.ai, Shirley Daniel is dedicated to reimagining financial compliance and making credit access fair, transparent, and inclusive. With over two decades of leadership experience in IT, cybersecurity, and fintech across the Middle East, South Asia, and the APJ region, she has driven market expansion for global technology firms. Recognising the limitations of outdated credit scoring, she founded Atna to build a better system. Through innovations like Intelli Suite for comprehensive KYC/KYB and Tru Suite for advanced deepfake detection, all powered by the ATNA Score, she empowers businesses to prevent fraud and foster inclusive growth.



GARGI RAWAT

Senior Anchor, Editorial Head
Special News, NDTV

Gargi Rawat has been for over two decades in the realm of news reporting as a senior news anchor and environment reporter with NDTV 24x7. Her educational journey took her through the esteemed Welham Girls' School, Dehradun, and St. Stephen's College of Delhi University. Throughout her illustrious career, Gargi has been a familiar face on the channel, contributing to numerous documentaries and environment-related programs. Notably, she played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of environmental awareness through her involvement in significant campaigns at NDTV. From 'The Greenathon' to 'Save Our Tigers', 'Protecting India's Coastline', and the 'Banega Swachh India' initiative, Gargi has been at the forefront of impactful journalism.

SESSION 2: NURTURING THE ECONOMY: UNPAID CARE WORK AT HOMES

India's care economy, often also called as Purple Economy, represents one of the largest yet least acknowledged sectors within its socio-economic landscape. In India, women shoulder an overwhelming 84 percent of unpaid care time, undertaking work whose imputed economic value stands between 15% and 17% of the nation's GDP. According to the 2024 Time Use Survey, women devote an average of 305 minutes daily to unpaid domestic chores compared to men's 88 minutes, a disparity that drastically limits their paid working time and keeps female labour force participation at just 33.7 percent.

This session aims to reframe care work from a private, household issue into a critical macroeconomic challenge. Guided by frameworks like the ILO's "5Rs"—Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, and Represent, the discussion will pivot towards actionable policy solutions. The panel will focus on how strategic investments in care infrastructure can alleviate time poverty, mitigate the severe "motherhood wage penalty," and unlock the human capital needed to drive India toward a truly inclusive Viksit Bharat.



DR. SHAMIKA RAVI

Economic Advisory Council to
the Prime Minister

Dr. Shamika Ravi is a Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Secretary to the Government of India. She previously served as Director of Research at Brookings India, Vice President (Economic Policy) at Observer Research Foundation, and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution. Her research focuses on development economics, including finance, healthcare, urbanisation, gender equality, welfare, and poverty. She has taught postgraduate courses at ISB and BITS School of Management. Dr. Ravi holds a PhD from NYU, a Master's from Delhi School of Economics, and a BA (Hons) from LSR, Delhi.



AMB. VEENA SIKRI

Former Ambassador, Convenor
of South-Asia Women's
Network

Veena Sikri's career and experience straddle the worlds of academia and diplomacy. She has served for 37 years (1971-2008) as a career diplomat with the IFS, India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh (2003-06), Malaysia (2000-03), India's Consul General in Hong Kong (1996-2000), Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (1989-92) and at the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York (1977-81), where she represented India in the UN Security Council, ECOSOC, and at Summit meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement. Post retirement, she joined academia as Professor, holding the Ford Foundation endowed Chair, Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, and concurrently Visiting Senior Research Fellow with the Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore (2008-2011). She is the Founding Trustee and Convenor of the South Asia Women's Network (SWAN).



Dr. Cchavi Vasisht is Associate Fellow at the Centre for Geopolitics and Strategic Studies. She has been awarded her PhD from the Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has been awarded the UGC NET Senior Research Fellowship to pursue her research work. She has a keen interest in geopolitics of South Asia, Southeast Asia particularly Myanmar and Gender related issues. She has also co-edited books titled “Revisiting Myanmar” and “Perspectives from and within India and its Neighbourhood.”

DR. CCHAVI VASISHT

Associate Fellow CRF

SESSION 3: BREAKING LINES OF CONTROL AND PATRIARCHY: LAW AND DEFENCE

In India, women constitute roughly 15–20% of enrolled advocates, yet their presence declines sharply at senior levels and among designated senior counsel. Women account for only about 14% of High Court judges and fewer than 15% of the judges of India, reflecting persistent barriers to elevation. Within defence services, women comprise around 1% of the armed forces, though recent policy shifts, including permanent commissions and expanded combat-support roles, signal gradual change.

This panel will examine structural and cultural barriers that restrict women’s participation in the judiciary, the armed forces, and strategic decision-making roles, while highlighting policy reforms and institutional practices that expand inclusion. Panellists will share their professional experiences and insights on navigating male-dominated spaces, reshaping organisational cultures, and building pathways for women’s leadership.



Justice Hima Kohli served as a judge of the Supreme Court of India from 2021 to 2024. After earning degrees in history and law from the University of Delhi, she practised law before her appointment to the Delhi High Court in 2006. There, she delivered notable rulings on prisoner rights, juvenile protection, and monitored Delhi’s COVID-19 response. In 2021, she became the first woman Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court. During her Supreme Court tenure, Justice Kohli authored 40 judgments and sat on 208 benches, ruling on significant cases involving the administrative powers, misleading advertisements, and marriage equality.

JUSTICE HIMA KOHLI

Former Judge, Supreme Court



Smt. Dipti Mohil Chawla (IDAS: 1995) is a senior officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service, presently serving as Additional Secretary in the Department of Defence under the Ministry of Defence. With her tenure extended until May 6, 2026, she plays a key role in strengthening defence acquisition frameworks and enhancing procurement efficiency. She is closely involved in the review and streamlining of the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), contributing to greater transparency, accountability, and strategic reform within India's defence procurement ecosystem.

DIPTI MOHIL CHAWLA

Additional Secy, MoD



Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal is a distinguished jurist and former judge of the Delhi High Court whose career has advanced access to justice and women's rights. A topper of the Delhi Judicial Service, she held key roles including Member Secretary of the Delhi Legal Services Authority, where she launched mobile legal aid and legal awareness initiatives. She contributed to justice reforms benefiting women and marginalised groups and authored Woman Know Thyself, promoting legal literacy and empowerment for women in India.

JUSTICE SANGITA DHINGRA SEHGAL

High Court of Delhi



Wg Cdr Gitanjali Singh (Retd), commissioned into the Indian Air Force in 2011, is a distinguished Aeronautical Engineer. She made history at the Air Force Academy by setting six records and becoming the first woman to win both the Best in Ground Service and Outdoor Training Trophies. Serving on the IAF's transport fleet, she executed diverse operational missions and major exercises. A respected commentator and strategic writer, her excellence earned her the GOC-in-C (2017) and Chief of the Air Staff (2022) Commendations. Her career reflects quiet determination, operational credibility, and an enduring commitment to the values of the Indian Air Force.

GITANJLI SINGH

Retd. Wing Commander



**GATHI PRAKASH
KARRAH**

Partner, Cyril Amarchand
Mangaldas

Gathi Prakash Karrah is a dispute resolution practitioner with over 13 years of experience specialising in international and domestic commercial arbitration, corporate-commercial disputes, and cross-border litigation. She is known for managing complex, high-volume matters involving private equity investments, promoter-shareholder disputes, public infrastructure and construction projects, high-value media rights contracts, and sanctions compliance issues. Recognised for her strategic approach and commercial insight, she has built a strong reputation for handling sophisticated disputes across multiple sectors and jurisdictions.



DEVNA ARORA

Deputy Head (South Asia)
at SIAC

Devna Arora is the Deputy Head (South Asia) at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre. Prior to joining SIAC, she was a Partner at a leading law firm in New Delhi. Devna graduated from the National Law University, Delhi in 2013. She was awarded the International Arbitration Scholarship by Georgetown University, where she completed her LLM in International Legal Studies.

SESSION 4: DAUGHTERS OF THE SOIL: VOICES FROM RURAL INDIA

India's development story has increasingly foregrounded the shift from women's development to women-led development. Yet, for decades, women in rural India remained confined within deeply entrenched socio-cultural boundaries, their roles largely restricted to unpaid household labour, caregiving, and subsistence agriculture, with limited access to education and finance. Over the last decade, however, a visible transformation has begun unfolding across rural India. Government flagship schemes and grassroots interventions by private and philanthropic institutions have collectively enabled women to step beyond traditional roles.

As a result, rural women, once seen only as scheme beneficiaries, are now emerging as entrepreneurs, community leaders, agri-innovators, artisans, service providers, and local employers. This session situates these lived experiences within the broader national vision of Sashakt Nari, Viksit Bharat, recognising rural women not merely as recipients of development but as architects of India's grassroots transformation.



SUBODH SINGH

Head – CSR (Mumbai Region),
Adani Foundation

Mr. Subodh Singh leads the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of the Adani Foundation across the Mumbai Region, providing strategic oversight across multiple locations and managing diverse implementation teams. In this role, he steers community development programmes spanning rural infrastructure, social development, and sector-aligned CSR interventions supporting various Adani Group businesses, including electricity distribution, airports, and real estate. With over fourteen years of experience in the CSR domain, Mr. Singh brings deep expertise in strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and integrated programme design.



GOYAL SONALBEN NARAN

Founder Sri Gopal Gir
Gaushala

Mrs. Goyal Sonalben Naran is the Founder of Sri Gopal Gir Gaushala and a leading grassroots dairy entrepreneur whose journey exemplifies perseverance, enterprise, and community-led growth. Starting her dairy venture with just three cows and limited income, she steadily expanded her operations through institutional guidance and government credit support. With financial assistance from the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, she scaled her gaushala to include 50 indigenous Gir and Lankrej cows, supported by modern dairy infrastructure. For her work, she has been awarded the Best Pashupalak Award and the National Gopal Ratna Award by the Government of India.



PUSHPALATA KRUSHNA GAUTAM

Sarpanch, Alezari Village,
Tirora, Maharashtra

Ms. Pushpalata Krushna Gautam is the Sarpanch of Alezari Village, Tirora, and a grassroots community leader committed to women's empowerment and rural development. She began her journey by forming a Mahila Bachat Gat (women's self-help group) and serving as its Secretary, strengthening financial inclusion at the village level. She later worked as a volunteer with the Adani Foundation, leading door-to-door awareness initiatives among adolescent girls on anaemia prevention and health practices. Promoted as a Sangini, she contributed to programmes on Suposhan, malnutrition, breastfeeding awareness, and maternal health, including household-level health screenings. In her current capacity as Sarpanch, she has enabled SHGs to establish livelihood enterprises.

** The panel further includes seven inspiring rural women leaders and entrepreneurs whose journeys reflect resilience, economic empowerment, and sustainable rural transformation.*

SESSION 5: LISTEN TO HER

In an age of amplified noise and shrinking attention spans, listening has become a radical act. Listen to Her is conceived as a reflective conversation with Nandita Das, an artist whose work consistently bridges cinema and conscience. Across more than four decades in film and public life, she has chosen stories that disturb comfort, centre the marginalised, and challenge prejudice with quiet moral force. Her work reminds us that culture is not neutral; it shapes how we see power, dignity, and each other.

This fireside chat will explore the responsibility of the artist in turbulent times; the intersection of gender, identity, and storytelling; and the role of empathy in shaping public discourse. It will reflect on how creative expression can become a site of resistance as well as reconciliation, and how women's voices in the arts influence social imagination beyond policy frameworks. The conversation seeks not only to hear Nandita Das's journey, but to ask what it means to live a life where art and ethics remain inseparable. And why, now more than ever, we must pause to truly listen.



NANDITA DAS

Actor, Director, Writer,
Producer and Social Advocate

Nandita Das has acted in more than 40 feature films in 10 different languages. Her directorial debut, *Firaaq* (2008), premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and garnered many accolades and critical appreciation, both in India and abroad. In 2011, she was conferred the 'Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters' by the French Government. Her second directorial feature, *Manto*, a biopic of writer Saadat Hasan Manto, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2018. Her first book, *Manto & I*, chronicles her 6-year-long journey of making the film. In 2016, she founded Nandita Das Initiatives (NDI). This creative platform produced her feature films *Manto* and *Zwigato*, her third directorial film which explores the struggles of a food delivery rider and his family. She directed and produced shorts such as *India's Got Colour* and *Listen to Her* that shed light on important social issues.

SESSION 6: BEARING THE BRUNT, DRIVING THE SOLUTIONS: WOMEN AND CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change is not gender neutral. Across regions and social groups, women often face greater risks because of unequal access to land, finance, information, mobility, and decision-making spaces. In rural and tribal areas, where forests, water, and natural resources sustain daily life, environmental degradation directly increases women's workload, weakens livelihoods, and deepens social vulnerability. From disasters and displacement to water stress, biodiversity loss, and declining commons, women are frequently the first to feel the impacts and the last to benefit from institutional responses. Yet they also play a central role in managing resources, sustaining households, and protecting local ecosystems.

This panel recognises women not only as those bearing the burden, but as key drivers of climate solutions. Across India, women are leading conservation efforts, strengthening community adaptation, preserving traditional ecological knowledge, and shaping sustainable systems. Bringing together voices from policy, grassroots practice, and conservation, the discussion will explore how gender-responsive approaches can strengthen climate governance, rural development, and ecological resilience, inseparable. And why, now more than ever, we must pause to truly listen.



PRAKRITI SRIVASTAVA

IFS, Former PCCF of Kerala

Ms Prakriti Srivastava, a former Indian Forest Service officer, served as a Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in Kerala. Ms Srivastava has served in Indian Forest Service for 35 years while serving on the Kerala cadre as well as various capacities in the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. She has also served as a Country Director of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)- India Program. Ms. Srivastava and her team have earned a reputation for effectively working against illegal encroachers, wildlife traffickers, timber smugglers and illicit timber factories in some of Kerala's most important landscapes for wildlife.



DR. SONALI GHOSH

Field Director of Kaziranga
National Park

Dr. Sonali Ghosh is a senior Indian Forest Service officer and wildlife conservation leader with over 23 years of experience in biodiversity and protected area management in India. She is the former Field Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, where she made history as its first woman to hold the position. She also became the first Indian to receive the Tony Conservationton Miller Award at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025. Known for integrating scientific and community-based conservation approaches, she has led significant initiatives in Kaziranga and Manas National Park.



AARUSHI NISHANK

National Convener of the Sparsh Ganga Foundation

Aarushi Nishank is an Indian actor, film producer, entrepreneur, social activist, renowned Kathak dancer, and TEDx speaker. She currently serves as the National Convener of the Sparsh Ganga Foundation, having launched large-scale environmental initiatives to conserve the River Ganga in alignment with the Namami Gange mission. Through her work across arts, cinema, and social advocacy, she promotes environmental awareness and community engagement, inspiring audiences nationwide by combining cultural expression with purposeful action for sustainability and social change.



RUCHI KASHYAP

Executive Trustee and CEO,
Atmashakti Trust

Ms. Ruchi Kashyap is Executive Trustee of Atmashakti, bringing over 25 years of experience in the development sector since beginning her grassroots work in 1998. She has led the organisation since 2008, driving innovation, collective action, and sustainable initiatives for tribal and marginalised communities in Odisha. A strong advocate of inclusive leadership, she mentors a team of nearly 400 professionals and promotes diversity within the workforce. In 2023, she completed a Master of Science in Nonprofit Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania.



ANJU BISHT

MD, Saukhyam Reusable Pads

Anju Bist is Managing Director of Saukhyam Foundation and co-leads CARE (Campus Action for Reusable Essentials), a national youth movement advancing climate-positive menstrual health. CARE replaces disposable pads with reusables, cutting plastic waste and averting 5.8 kg of CO₂ per person annually. Known as the “Padwoman of India,” she has received the Women Transforming India Award from NITI Aayog, the Sheroes Award, the Red Shakti Award, and many others. She advances measurable, grassroots climate action through menstrual health.

SESSION 7: WOMEN REDEFINING INDIAN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Over the last decade, India's push towards women-led development has enabled the rise of iconic women leaders at the national stage; yet, as a group they remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making. At the time of Independence, women's representation in Parliament stood at barely 6%. More than seven decades later, it has risen only modestly, to around 13% in the Lok Sabha. Political spaces continue to be shaped by patriarchy: male-dominated networks, informal power structures, and everyday constraints that quietly signal women don't belong. Women leaders also carry the double burden of domesticity, balancing household responsibilities alongside public office.

At the campaign and governance level, basic infrastructure gaps such as safe sanitation, secure mobility, and workable schedules become structural barriers. Further, women's access to justice, state systems, and customary institutions varies sharply across identities. Yet there are visible signals of change where women are reshaping governance outcomes at the grassroots. The panel features women leaders and institution-builders who are reshaping governance, from grassroots democracy and civic action to organisational leadership and youth political participation.



KALYANI RAJ

Patron in AIWC

Kalyani Raj has extensive experience working on gender and climate change. She has advocated for disaster preparedness, adaptation, and mitigation, as well as alternative energy, which she has worked on for over a decade with the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). For the past four years, she has participated in the UNFCCC processes, including attending several COPs where she worked closely with the Women and Gender Constituency. With AIWC, Kalyani draws attention to the wealth of knowledge women have to share on adaptation in terms of traditional knowledge and skills. She has conducted a variety of advocacy workshops, including on disaster preparedness and access to water, as well as on the socio-economic impacts of climate change on women. She consistently works on bringing the voices of grassroots women to the international level.



CHHAVI RAJAWAT

Former Sarpanch

Chhavi Rajawat is a two-time Sarpanch of Soda village, Tonk, Rajasthan, committed to bridging India's rural-urban divide through sustainable, gender-balanced development. An alumna of Lady Shri Ram College with a background in business management and corporate experience, she left her career to serve her village. During her tenure, she ensured transparency, water access, roads, banking inclusion for women, electrification, sanitation, waste management, and educational reforms. An Aspen Fellow and Young Global Leader (WEF), she has received multiple national awards. She currently manages Eminent Girls College, aiming to empower rural youth and create local champions for community development.



VENU DHINGRA

Author and Social activist

Venu Agrahari Dhingra is an author, social worker, environmentalist and political activist from Allahabad, daughter of Late Shri Shyama Charan Gupta. A commerce graduate and LLB, she is a registered lawyer at Allahabad High Court. She writes on social issues and speaks on women's empowerment and menstrual hygiene. Author of Power Women: India's Political Winners and its sequel, she founded SariThon by Power Women India. She has led social, environmental, and political initiatives and received the Paul Harris Fellowship.



BHAKTI SHARMA

National Executive Member,
Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha

Bhakti Sharma is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party. She has been nominated as a Member of the State Audit Advisory Board for Madhya Pradesh. Within BJYM, she served as the Co-In-Charge for Uttar Pradesh. In her current roles, she serves as an elected representative of the Barkhedi Abdullah Panchayat, where she worked at the grassroots level for seven years, focusing on local governance and community development.



SIKTA DEO

Contributing Editor, Senior
News Anchor, NDTV

Sikta Deo is a distinguished Indian news anchor and television journalist with nearly three decades of experience across broadcast journalism, field reporting, long-format storytelling, and editorial leadership. Known for her compelling on-ground coverage and calm, authoritative anchoring, she has reported India's most defining political, social, cultural, and environmental stories. Currently a Contributing Editor and Senior Anchor at NDTV, she leads major editorial projects on ground, prime-time shows, and high-impact field assignments, bringing a rare combination of newsroom strategy and frontline reporting excellence.

SESSION 8: DIPLOMACY THROUGH HER LENS: WOMEN LEADING GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

At a time when the international order is navigating geopolitical tensions, economic realignments, climate challenges, and development imperatives, the role of women in diplomacy is not merely symbolic; it is transformative. This session brings together four distinguished women diplomats to reflect on how leadership through a gendered lens reshapes global engagement, multilateral negotiations, and bilateral partnerships. Further, ensure women's leadership at the highest levels of global engagement and what it truly represents - symbolically, structurally, and strategically.

The conversation will explain pathways to leadership, the evolving role of women in foreign policy decision-making, inclusive diplomacy, and how gender perspectives enrich strategic thinking in trade, development cooperation, peacebuilding, and climate action. As a way forward, the discussion will consider how governments, think tanks and interest groups can move beyond representation and move towards ensuring that women's leadership becomes integral, not incidental, to shaping the future of global engagement.



**HE DIANA
MICKEVIČIENĖ**

Ambassador of Lithuania
to India

Diana Mickevičienė has served as Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to India since November 14, 2022. A career diplomat, she previously served as Ambassador to China. She held senior leadership roles at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Director General for Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. She has also served in New Delhi, including as Chargé d'Affaires. Alongside her diplomatic career, she lectured on Asian and Indian history at Vilnius University for over two decades. She holds degrees in Philosophy, International Relations, and Cultural History. She speaks English, Russian, and French fluently.



**HE MAHISHINI
COLONNE**

Ambassador of Sri Lanka
to India

A senior career diplomat in the Sri Lanka Foreign Service, Ms. Mahishini Colonne assumed duties as High Commissioner to India in June 2025. Her current posting marks a return to New Delhi, having previously served as Deputy High Commissioner from 2011 – 2014. With a career spanning over 25 years, she has extensive experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy as well as regional expertise.



HE MARY MUTUKU

Deputy Head of Mission of
Kenya to India

Mary Mutuku is currently serving as the Deputy Head of Mission of Kenya to India. With a distinguished career spanning diplomacy, political leadership, and business, she brings a wealth of experience in strategic management, logistics, political operations, and international relations. A graduate of Makerere University with a degree in International Business, Mary Mutuku is deeply committed to diplomacy, conflict resolution, and fostering positive government partnerships and relationships, with a focus on Kenya's relationship with the rest of the world, both domestically and on the global stage.



HE MARJE LUUP

Estonian Ambassador to India

Marje Luup is the Estonian ambassador to India, and she is also accredited to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. She joined the foreign service in 1996. She has worked at Estonian embassies in Helsinki and Stockholm as an economic diplomat and deputy head respectively. Between 2003 and 2010, Marje Luup headed the Development Cooperation Division of the External Economic Policy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from 2004 to 2010, she was also acting Director General of EU Development Cooperation. Between 2013 and 2023, Marje Luup was the Director General of the Administrative Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

SESSION 9: CHANGING THE SCRIPT: WOMEN, MEDIA, AND CULTURAL POWER

Media does not merely reflect society — it scripts it. From newsrooms to film sets, from editorial meetings to streaming platforms, narratives shape public morality, political imagination, and the socio-cultural norms that govern everyday life. In a nation aspiring toward *Viksit Bharat 2047*, women-led development cannot be confined to economic participation or policy inclusion alone. It must also mean women-led storytelling. Because those who control narratives ultimately influence how power itself is imagined and exercised.

As society evolves, media both responds to change and propels it. This conversation therefore moves beyond representation to interrogate authorship — who writes, who edits, who frames, who decides. Not only visibility, but voice. Not only participation, but power. Are women simply present in media spaces — or are they shaping its ethical direction and cultural imagination? If development is ultimately about redistributing power, then cultural power is foundational. To build an equitable and confident India by 2047, we must consciously rewrite the stories we tell — and transform who gets to tell them.



CHHAYA SHARMA

IPS, Inspector General at the Bureau of Police Research & Development

Chhaya Sharma is a distinguished Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the 1999 AGMUT cadre and currently serves as Inspector General and Director of the Bureau of Police Research and Development under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. With over 22 years of service, she has held key positions including Joint Commissioner of Police (Eastern Range and Economic Offences Wing) in Delhi and Deputy Inspector General at the National Human Rights Commission. She notably led the Special Investigation Team in the 2012 Nirbhaya case, ensuring swift arrests, scientific investigation, and filing the charge-sheet within 18 days, leading to maximum convictions.



ANTARA LAHIRI

Editor - Bewakoofiyaan, and Four More Shots Please!

Antara Lahiri is an award-winning film editor with nearly fifteen years of experience shaping feature films and premium series that foreground complex female protagonists and contemporary Indian identities. Beyond the edit suite, Antara is a TEDx MICA speaker and the host of the YouTube podcast The Finest Cut, where she engages in conversations on storytelling, media, and creative practice. She also conducts editing workshops at leading film institutes, including her alma mater, the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. Working at the intersection of craft and cultural discourse, she advocates for strengthening structural frameworks in post-production as an essential part of building a more equitable creative industry.



SHEELA BHATT

Senior Political Journalist

Sheela Bhatt is a Delhi-based senior journalist with 46 years of extensive experience in reporting, writing, and television. She has unique experience of all three media - print, digital and television. In 80s, she was youngest editor and publisher of Mumbai-based Abhiyaan, political weekly in Gujarati. She shifted to Delhi to join India Today. Later she joined Star television as executive producer. For 16 years, she worked at rediff.com, India's first online portal, and did pioneering work in Online journalism. Currently, she is writing for The Print, Dainik Bhaskar, Gulf News and rediff.com



ARCHANA BORHADE

Cinematographer

Archana Borhade is a software engineer turned filmmaker based in Mumbai. She is the first Indian female cinematographer to feature as 2021's Rising Star of Cinematography in the prestigious American Cinematographer (ASC) magazine. In 2018, she became the first female cinematographer to win the Maharashtra State Award for Best Cinematography for the Marathi feature film 'Idak'. She has been conferred the ISC title for cinematographic excellence by the Indian Society of Cinematographers (ISC).



JOYEETA BASU

Editor Sunday Guardian

Joyeeta Basu is an editor, reporter, writer and speaker. She reports, writes and comments on matters related to policy, politics and geopolitics. She is the Editor of the weekly newspaper, The Sunday Guardian, as well as the daily newspaper, The Daily Guardian. Joyeeta The Sunday Guardian is known for its focus on policy and politics, including geopolitics. She hosts the popular podcast, "The Sunday Guardian Podcast with Joyeeta Basu" for the newspaper's YouTube channel. Joyeeta Basu regularly appears on NewsX, an English language national television channel, to comment on matters related to politics and geopolitics.



SASHAKT NARI, VIKSIT BHARAT

Women-Led
Development @2047

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