

# Vedanta CEO Deshnee Naidoo On Evolving Roles Of Women In Heavy Industry

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## Bias To Breaking Ground: Vedanta's Deshnee Naidoo On Evolving Roles Of Women In Heavy Industry

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Deshnee Naidoo

Image: Hindustan Zinc Instagram

India Inc stands strong with its women leaders redefining trends in almost every sector today. In a recent interview with *NDTV Profit* on the occasion of Women's Day, Deshnee Naidoo, CEO of Vedanta, shared insights from her 28-year career on the structural changes currently reshaping the industrial sector.

Her observations point to a clear transition: women are no longer just entering the workforce; they are moving into high-stakes, non-traditional leadership and operational roles.

Naidoo noted that the industry has long been defined by deep-seated biases. For decades, women were often denied the chance to prove their technical worth, regardless of their actual skills. However, she suggests the environment is finally catching up to the talent, with modern industrial frameworks beginning to prioritise competency over gender-based assumptions.

A significant part of Naidoo's focus at Vedanta involves integrating women into the "grassroots" of heavy industry—areas like smelting and production that were once considered exclusively male domains.

At Vedanta Aluminium, home to the world's largest metal smelter, the company has commissioned India's first fully women-operated production line. To date, more than 100 women have been trained for critical technical roles in the smelting process, moving the needle beyond traditional administrative or support functions.

These initiatives are evident in the data. At Hindustan Zinc, for example, women now account for approximately 26% of the workforce. Naidoo emphasised that the strategy isn't just about recruitment "fluff," but about creating a sustainable career path. By providing advanced training and clear opportunities for growth, the goal is to ensure women stay and advance within the company.

Ultimately, Naidoo views this era as a turning point. While she expressed personal humility regarding her leadership role, while acknowledging the gradual transformation of the industry.

She advised women to not be constrained by what has happened in the past and put themselves out there. "I am a firm believer of taking firm decision and making them work for you," Naidoo said.

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