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# Hindustan Zinc chairperson: Not just gender diversity, bring in diversity of thought & expertise

*Priya Agarwal Hebbar, daughter of Anil Agarwal, heads the board of Vedanta Ltd subsidiary company Hindustan Zinc.*

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APRIL 01, 2024 / 04:25 PM IST

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Vedanta founder Anil Agarwal; Agarwal's daughter, Priya Agarwal Hebbar (second from right) is chairperson of Hindustan Zinc, which employs women in non-traditional roles like underground mining and mining rescue teams. (Images via Wikimedia Commons & Hindustan Zinc)

Vedanta founder **Anil Agarwal's** daughter Priya Agarwal Hebbar is chairperson of Hindustan Zinc, a National Stock Exchange (NSE)-listed subsidiary of Vedanta Ltd. Agarwal Hebbar has a bachelor's in psychology and business management from Warwick in the UK. She has been leading the board of Hindustan Zinc for about a year (at the time of publishing on April 1, 2024, Hindustan Zinc shares were trading at Rs 306.15 on the NSE, and the company had a market cap of Rs 1.29 lakh crore).

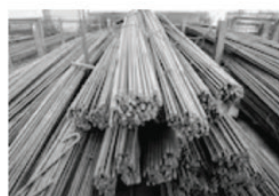
Agarwal Hebbar says when she first joined the board, the other members were all men in their 50s and 60s. Now, **Hindustan Zinc** has five women board members. And because "women understand women", this has triggered multiple changes in the organization, many of them geared towards breaking "mental barriers" and bringing more women into the mining and natural resources sector.

Edited excerpts from a Zoom interview, in which Agarwal Hebbar spoke about her love for music (a passion she says she shares with her father, **Anil Agarwal**) and animals, and women in mining - from underground mining to mining rescue teams and in leadership positions in mining companies:

## Why and when did you join Hindustan Zinc?

Last year, I joined Hindustan Zinc as chairperson. So, it has been one year. At that time, I was the only female member of the board, there were seven other 50-60-year-old male, experienced business individuals. At that time, I realised that this needs to change if we really want to progress as an organization. And if we want to be where the world is going, we need a lot of diversity of thought in the board. Not only gender diversity - when we talk about diversity of thought, gender diversity, individuals with different expertise, maybe sustainability, maybe HR, so that is where my journey began.

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In 2019, India had legalized women to do underground (mining). Hindustan Zinc... got women underground... train(ed) an all-women rescue teams and train(ed) them to a level where today, they are ready for international championships.

**Traditionally we haven't had many women in the mines or in the leadership positions of mining companies. Can you tell us about some of the challenges?**

Mining and natural resources sector is generally known to be a male dominant sector. A few years ago, when we were defining our ESG sustainability goals, one of the core goals was that we want to achieve 30 percent women across our employees by 2030 or sooner; we're already close to 21 percent. When we made that decision, at that time, we became a company that was encouraging hiring of women, we were putting in policies that were female-friendly, we were making sure we do everything to remove that mental barrier of women joining us - whether it was maternity leave or a no-questions-asked leave every month.

Today Hindustan Zinc has five women on the board. And when you have women on the board, when you have women driving the company, women in leadership - women understand women - the kinds of policies and requirements the company... (introduced) to transform into an organization that welcomes women and attracts more and more women. So over time, we've built those policies to encourage women employees.

It's not just about women or men, in fact, we have transgender individuals, we have differently abled individuals we have individuals from different communities, we have hired individuals who are ex-defence. So we are looking at diversity and inclusion on a very broad spectrum.

We launched our transgender policy two years ago. One of the recommendations from them (transgender team members) was that the gender affirmation strategy is very important to them. It's very expensive. We launched a policy that we will provide them Rs 2 lakh (for the surgery). And also leave while recovering. Three (people have availed of this for surgery) so far.

**How do you start your day?**

I am very passionate about music. And I have a lot of love for animals. So my day starts with a lot of music and a lot of time with my pets. Once my daughter goes to school, I spend a good 45 minutes walking my dogs, with my earphones on and listening to some great music. That's my one hour of me-time, which gets me ready for the rest of the day.

**How many pets do you have?**

Five dogs and two cats.

**What music are you listening to when you're walking your dogs?**

I love all music. So it depends. If I'm in a happy mood, I'm listening to Bollywood or new age electronica or classic rock. If I am in a mood that is a little gloomy, then I am listening to a lot of R&B and heartbreak songs (laughs).

**Any new Bollywood or any other songs that have caught your attention recently?**

One song that inspires me and a song that kind of gets me energized through the day is a song called 'You gotta be' by Des'ree.

**Is this love of music something you share with your dad?**

He loves singing. In fact, when he came to Mumbai for the first time, he said that if I don't make it in business, I'll work towards becoming a singer.



**CHANPREET KHURANA** *Features and weekend editor, Moneycontrol*

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FIRST PUBLISHED: APR 1, 2024 04:20 PM

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