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Collective mission led by Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti

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India stands at the cusp of a new era, as we march towards Viksit Bharat@2047. Our remarkable strides in leveraging digital technology to foster inclusion or strengthen public systems inspire confidence, even as our aspirations grow. The call for Viksit Bharat is a collective commitment to build a nation where every citizen has equitable access, infinite opportunities, and agency.

The point that I ponder is not just what kind of nation we are building, but who will build it. This next phase of nation-building is already unfolding in the villages, led largely by women and youth. I believe that they have the power to be the greatest engines of transformation - imbued with the spirit of sewa and samvaad.

India's strength today is not just its numbers, but the fact that over 65% of our population is under 35 and nearly half of these are women. Across the country, women and youth, especially from rural areas, are stepping into leadership roles and driving a development story deeply rooted in Indian values.

Women have long been the custodians of care and community, equipped with a unique lens: One rooted in empathy, equity, and ethical action. Youth, meanwhile, bring unmatched energy and imagination to the development table, passionate about transforming the very communities they come from. They know the challenges firsthand and are best positioned to drive scalable solutions.

A shining example is Yuva Gram in Maharashtra's Beed district, where local youth mobilized ₹2.5 crore and over 200 volunteers to restore water infrastructure across ten drought-prone villages.

This growing wave of empowered youth and women signals a profound shift in who shapes India's development journey.

Flagship initiatives are unlocking the potential of women and youth at scale. The Skill India Mission is equipping six crore youth with future-ready skills, while platforms like the National Service Scheme engage lakhs in health, education, and climate programmes.

Fellowships such as Teach For India, and Piramal Foundation's Gandhi and Karuna Fellowship, place young professionals within public systems to navigate real-world challenges. At the grassroots, over 10 lakh ASHAs and 12 lakh anganwadi workers - largely women - form the trusted bridge between citizens and the State.

The synergy between such grassroots leadership and digital public infrastructure- such as Aadhaar, UPI, and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission- is truly transformative. A pivotal moment lies in equipping India's women and youth with digital tools and emerging technologies like AI. While digital infrastructure accelerates progress, its full potential is realised when driven by individuals committed to an ethical, human-centred approach.

A powerful example is Rose Angelina M Kharsyntiew, a village entrepreneur in Meghalaya, who uses the Common Services Centre scheme to deliver digital services in a remote district. Her work reflects how empowerment and access can catalyse local transformation.

Yet for every success story, there are gaps to be addressed to harness the true power of Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti.

In rural India, youth often grow up without platforms to engage meaningfully with public systems. Truly tapping into their potential requires involving them at every level of decision-making. Initiatives like Mera Yuva Bharat bridge this gap, enabling youth to contribute to grassroots nation-building and community development.

For young women, the challenge is steeper as entrenched gender norms often limit their mobility, choices, and voices. Harnessing young women's leadership requires breaking free from traditional mindsets. Over nine million women-led SHGs are already driving change, however the role of men is equally important in this shift. In Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, the YUVAW initiative- supported by UNFPA and CECOEDCON- brings young men together to challenge regressive norms, talk openly about menstruation, and model positive masculinity in homes and on football fields.

Empowered youth and women can together dismantle barriers and shape a more inclusive future.

At Piramal Foundation, we believe a Viksit Bharat starts from the last mile- anchored on the aspirations of India's women and youth. This movement requires shared action across civil society, private sector, and philanthropic actors. For instance, while CSR spending is directed to key areas, more focus is needed in underserved districts where the impact potential is highest.

The private sector plays a pivotal role in enabling dignified livelihoods through local enterprises and digital inclusion. It is heartening to see models like Tata STRIVE have the potential to train over 2 lakh youth annually, aligning skills with market demand.

Grassroots incubation hubs for women entrepreneurs can further drive systemic change. While initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have laid a strong foundation, the next step is reimagining India's development framework to be more equitable and inclusive.

India's youth and women represent the country's greatest strength, driving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. The next two decades belong to them - grounded in values, empowered by technology, and united by a shared goal.

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