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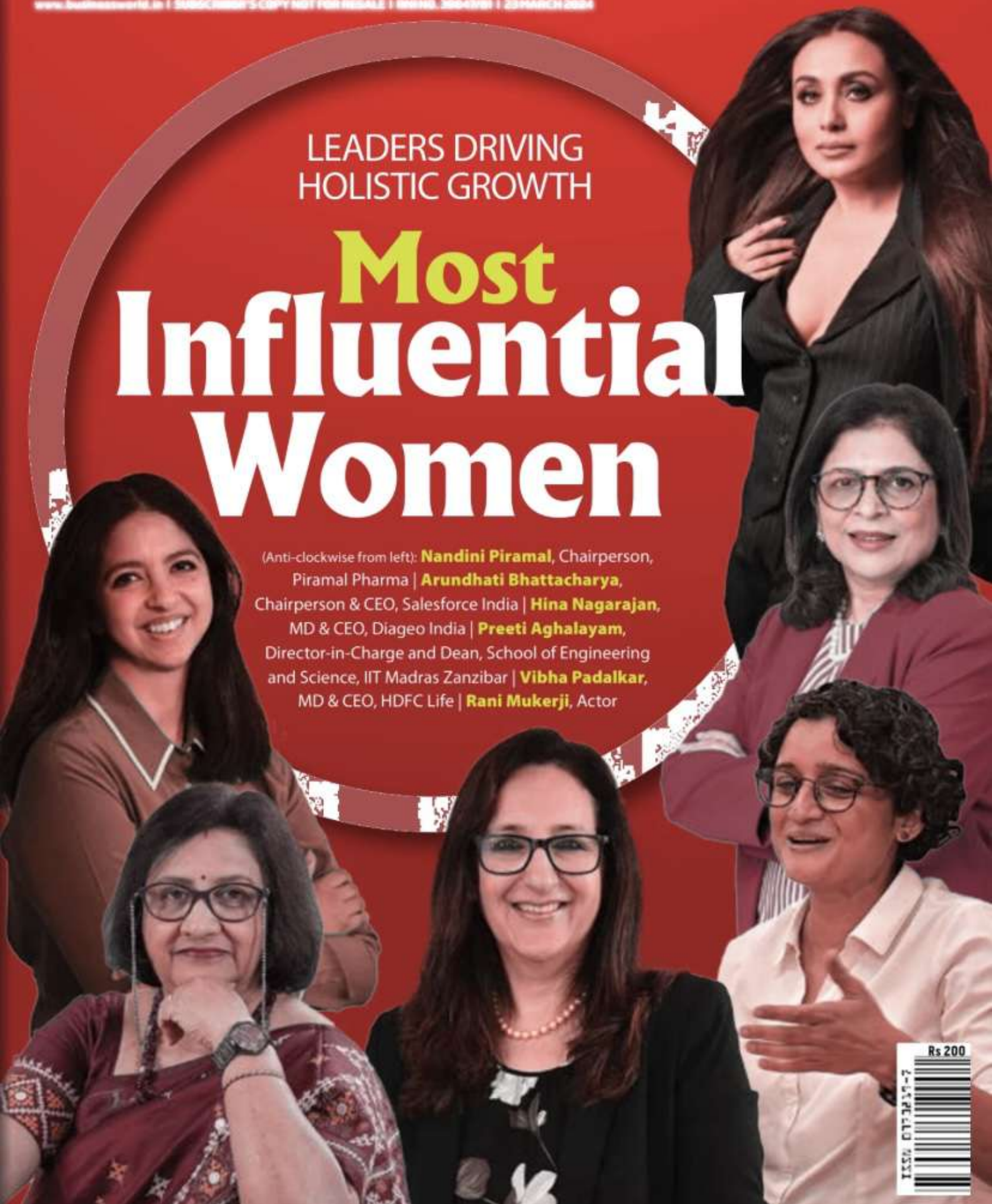
Special Issue

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LEADERS DRIVING
HOLISTIC GROWTH

Most Influential Women

(Anti-clockwise from left): **Nandini Piramal**, Chairperson, Piramal Pharma | **Arundhati Bhattacharya**, Chairperson & CEO, Salesforce India | **Hina Nagarajan**, MD & CEO, Diageo India | **Preeti Aghalayam**, Director-in-Charge and Dean, School of Engineering and Science, IIT Madras Zanzibar | **Vibha Padalkar**, MD & CEO, HDFC Life | **Rani Mukerji**, Actor



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**Vibha
Padalkar**

MD & CEO,
HDFC Life

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**Most
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PIONEERING LEGACY IN FINANCE, LEADERSHIP

Coming from a family of government servants — her mother has been in the civil services since 1964 and her father is a marine engineer — Vibha Padalkar, MD and CEO, HDFC Life, grew up surrounded by strong role models. Her mother was a pioneer who inspired Vibha and her family to embrace careers, have their own identities and share unique perspectives, setting clear expectations for Vibha to aim high and create her own path.

Padalkar pursued a chartered accountancy course at the CA Institute in England & Wales. Before becoming MD & CEO, Vibha was the CFO at HDFC Life. Prior to HDFC Life, she worked in the finance department across various industries.

During the challenging times of Covid-19, Padalkar made a groundbreaking decision to acquire a company, potentially becoming the first to do so. This move happened at an unprecedented time when survival was the focus for many.

Padalkar chose Exide Life as the target company, which has turned out to be an excellent deal for the company. Despite initial concerns about potential risks, seeing that she made the right choice, strived for success, and achieved it,

**VIBHA
PADALKAR,
MD & CEO,
HDFC Life**



even during such a challenging time, brought immense satisfaction.

Imposter Syndrome

The biggest challenge for many women originates from within due to conditioned beliefs that they are not good enough, often leading to imposter syndrome — an obstacle less common in men due to societal conditioning. Padalkar said that a man with only 20 per cent knowledge is confident enough to achieve the goal, while a woman, who understands 80 per cent of her job, still seems less confident. Despite being an inspiration for women, there were moments when, despite her seemingly perfect balancing act, Padalkar almost threw in the towel. She mentioned, “Women need to advocate for themselves, asserting their capabilities and the ability to figure things out. Additionally, having believers in leadership willing to support and take responsibility for their success is crucial.”

Be Natural

Regarding leadership style, she said that women should not copy men but instead use their natural

abilities. Whether navigating uncertainty or showing empathy, embracing their unique style is key. Women should be comfortable in the style they are used to. Many different roads can lead to the same answer, but conviction is the key to leadership.

Young, confident girls find things easier today. Unlike older female leaders, they have less self-doubt and feel more equality. They are cautioned against unnecessary fights. She warned not to fall and be a part of unnecessary battles, as it can be draining. Instead, she recommended focusing on substantial goals like leading a team or achieving significant outputs.

By Poonam Singh