

# Women and Mass Media: Gender Subjugation in Women Journalists' Career with a Reference to Gita Aravamudan

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Gita Aravamudan is from Bangalore. She started her journalistic career at Hindustan Times, New Delhi, at a time when there were a few women journalists. She has also worked with and written for *Indian Express*, *India Today*, *Sunday*, *Filmfare*, *Femina*, *Illustrated Weekly* and *Sunday Middy*.

Her first book *Voices In My Blood*, was published in 1990. Her second book, *Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy Of Female Foeticide and Infanticide*, was published in 2007 and became an instant best seller. *The Healing*, is her first novel published in 2008. Her other works include *Unbound: Indian women at work*, published in 2010, *Colour Of Gold* published in 2013. And her investigative journalism inspires an outstanding work, *Baby Makers: The story of Indian Surrogacy*, Published in 2014.

The research aims penetrating at the fictional fancied ideas as well as real nonfictional ideas posin at what Gita Aravamudan aiming towards as media personality and how she is drawn towards the gender issues throughout her career and what led her to take initiative to write on such issues. She becomes a pioneer while letting out the truths in association to surrogacy laws, consequences facing after violation of such laws and conspiracy woven by agents who work for surrogacy. She is interpreting many curious things through her stories. Women is weakened since the stone ages due to lack of exposure. She has been supersided aside utterly, facing all the difficulties she tries to overcome her weaknesses. There are people who observe and try to uplift them. And the government also tries to remove the disparity between men and women in many aspects. This is one such attempt where a woman finds herself an optimistic rays hope to find herself in a better environment.

Increasing the number of women journalists is likely to contribute to better coverage of women, more attention to women views and more visibility to gender quality views. However achieving more balanced and informative coverage of woman on gender quality issues should not be the province of women only, but both for men and women. Journalism is a vast field where myriad opportunities await men and women. Women need to be cleverer and more hardworking in order to survive in journalism because it is still a male domain. Women have proved that they are better workers than males like in every other field. But there is no equality as such in newspaper organisations. Men are preferred to women in these areas of work. The women who serve for a long period in the media to reach the top positions quit at their final stage of their career. This is because there are gender issues that arise not only in the workplace but also in their homes. This discrimination has given rise to gender debates all over the country. The journalist, Gita Aravamudan has concentrated on such gender issues, which she has experienced in her career. She has recorded such gender issues in the form of fiction, semi-fiction and investigative journalism. The incidents which she came across, are real incidents that happened during her profession.

*Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide in India*. A book that discovers the secrets causing around this criminal act. The book that was received very well by readers and generated much discussion on the subject. When she already done a series of articles on female infanticide in rural parts of Tamil Nadu. She focussed on the burning topic, foeticide is a crime committed by educated and rich people. They aborted daughters their daughters not out of ignorance or poverty but specially because they considered them to be economic burdens.

Gita Aravamuda's work, *Unbound: Indian women at Work*. The work deals with working women in many different fields across India. Their challenges and how they are changing work places from entertainment to corporate sectors. She gives a deep stress to working women all over the world no matter what the job or the pay. Bearing children and rearing a

family is always a challenge. She had interviewed about 200 women for the book but used only about 50 of these interviews.

Her work, *Colour of Gold*, which was published in 2013. The work is about mining activity in the Gold Mines of Kolar. *The Colour of Gold* flits back and forth between three different periods in its narrative spanning a hundred years. At the heart of the novel lies the town of KGF where gold was mined from ancient times satin back to the first millennium. The plot goes from one story to the other without the reader losing interest and ties up threat neatly in the end.

*Baby Makers: The Story of Indian Surrogacy* is a book about Surrogacy in India and how it got transformed from a marginalized and socially unacceptable procedure to a multimillion-dollar industry. It examines surrogacy laws and the experiences of everyone from the childless couple and the biological conditions of women after renting their wombs.

Today women are taking the challenge of underrepresentation in the media. They remain unrepresented at all levels of news organisations. A glass ceiling operates every workplace and prevents women from rising to top positions. Margaretha Geertsema, a professor of the department of Journalism, in her essay published on 10th October 2018, has expressed her view on the entry of women in journalism. According to her, in the nineteenth-century, women entered journalism primarily to appeal to female audiences. During this century, it is expected to write about topics considered to be of interest for women, such as food, fashion, family and furniture. However, today, as per the global studies, women remain underrepresented at all levels of news organisations with glass ceiling preventing women from rising to top positions. In her opinion, female journalists are facing challenges in war reporting and sports reporting and as opinion columnists. In terms of representation, women frequently represented in a negative or stereotypical light in the news media. The research is currently lack in this issue in India as well as outside the country. Therefore, gender issues in news coverage is a field of growing interest among female journalism studies scholars. The word 'gender' refers to socially constructed roles of men women and people who do not identify with the binary division of male or female.

This field of study has focussed on the participation of women in journalism, production of news, news media representation of women and challenges faced by them while carrying out the journalist duties. This area is an understudied one and not much research work carried in this field. The concept of gender traits that constitutes masculinity and femininity affected by omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization, the masculine in this fashion has identified as active domination adventurous rational creative; the feminism by systematic opposition to such traits as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional- binary oppositions.

## **II. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MEDIA**

Today as mass media is booming in India, there are wide opportunities opened up for women to work in media. Thus, more women are working in print, virtual and television media. The print media is witnessing more women writers and reporters. As the number of women in media across the country has increased, their working conditions are debated all over. Issues of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and exploitation in the job run in tandem with their careers.

By 2000, several women editors and columnists have made a name for themselves in their specialized areas of interest. As the entry of women into media has become easy, they are entering into areas hitherto considered male preserves like political news, business and sports journalism.

However, the participation of women in Indian journalism is still considered unconventional because it is a male-dominated and patriarchal society. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to examine how Indian women in media are placed and identified in society. Even today gender plays a decisive role in a woman's professional and societal duties (Ammu Joseph). There is still a presumption that sex is destiny, and this does not always go down well with women media professionals. For instance, many discard the idea that women have a special duty or responsibility to actively promote the coverage of gender issues and improve the portrayal and participation of women in media.

The run-away growth of media has thrown open opportunities to women in all the three major areas of the media; print, virtual and television. The hitherto-closed doors of media for women seem to have thrown wide open. If it is so, they should get equal access to opportunities to grow in the profession. They should get recruitments to upper-end positions. Women should rise in the profession to such positions by working their way up the ranks. The media should work as an important socialising agent to perpetuate the status of women within their organizations.

The status of women in media is not different from women working in other professions. When Gita Aravamudan entered the scenario of journalism in the 1960s, journalism was not as it is today. The participation of women in media

then was viewed as unconventional and even unethical. The women working in print media were constrained to certain 'meek' areas of news like those of cooking, sewing, flower-shows, Ikebana, fashion-shows etc. There were a few women participating in journalism. Some women journalists were working in Hindi news magazines and newspapers at the same time. Apart from Hindi, a major language press, there were many regional language presses like Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati and others in which women journalists published their reports and creative writings. The status of Indian women is decided by cultural factors such as class, caste, religion and ethnicity. It is clear that those women who were able to take advantage of the cultural context as mentioned above usually belonged to relatively privileged sections of society where women also had greater access to education. It is obvious that women who had entered prestigious professions like media in the early days came from reasonably affluent and liberal socio-economic backgrounds.

The women journalists who are creative writers in their respective languages were recognized as outstanding journalists. As Ammu Joseph puts it in her work *Women in Media: Making News*, women journalists who are active in their respective languages had been identified through their contributions to the literary world.

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