

# Working Media Women : Profile, Work Environment And Job Satisfaction

Review by Pooja Rana\*

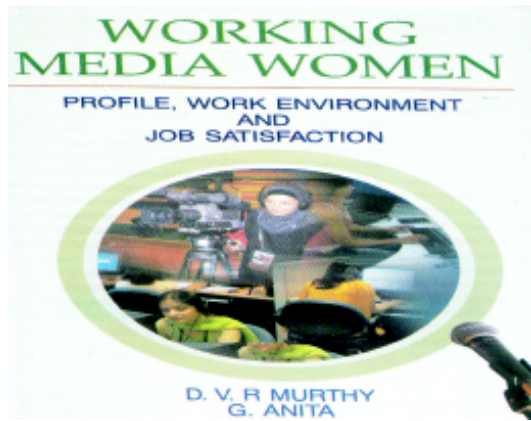
You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women -- Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

Dr. D. V. R. Murthy is a well known name in academics and media research. A journalist/turned/academician, he is presently the Associate Professor and Chairman, Board of Studies, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Andhra University. He has authored six books on journalism and media research.

Dr G. Anita worked as journalist in Eenadu for more than a decade and is currently associated with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Andhra University.

Both Murthy and Anita have put together their expertise and experience to come out with the research-based book, 'Working Media Women: Profile, Work Environment And Job Satisfaction'. The book examines the sociological issues of media women from print, television and radio - a much neglected aspect so far and rakes up questions like.

- Is the employment affecting the women working in media in relation to their personal life?
- How do working women in media cope with their family life?
- In an increasingly male - dominated workplace



setting, what kind of problems do the women journalists face?

Few similar studies focusing on the women media professionals in India have been carried out in the past too; but they restricted themselves to print journo. However, in the changed media scenario of

India, where we have around 110 primary channels of AIR, 30 Vividh Bharti stations, 75 local radio stations and more than four FM channels, no study that ignores these media can give conclusive results.

The book "Working Media Women: Profile, Work Environment And Job Satisfaction" is based on a study that was carried out in the year 2007 in three cities of Andhra Pradesh—a state that has witnessed a media boom in recent years. The authors have based their study on the data collected from 127 media women located at Hyderabad, Vijayawada and Vishakhapatnam. Many newspaper publications such as Eenadu, Andhra Bhoomi, The Hindu, Vaartha, Deccan Chronicle, New Indian Express, Andhra Jyothi along with All India Radio AM and FM stations and the headquarters of many TV networks are located in these three cities.

The book argues that the boom in the media industry has resulted in a corresponding increase in

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the work force as well. As per estimates, the number of journalists in India has jumped from 4700 journalists in early 1960s to around 13,000 in 1990s (Jeffrey, 2000). This boom initiated a new trend which marked a rise in the percentage of women joining this profession.

The first chapter of the book, 'Women and Media', highlights issues like the changing status of working woman in the Indian society; woman empowerment; gender issues at workplace; working women vis-a-vis family and, of course, women and media. The chapter also compares the problems faced by women journalists in various countries. The book, being research-based, also discusses the sociological underpinnings.

Murthy and Anita make some thought-provoking observations related to the working women.

"....the report (of the national committee on the status of women in India) highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees, the roles, rights and participation of women in all spheres of life were limited.....entry of women into the labour force is one such influence that has effected changes in the status of the women...In spite of the entry of women into the labour force and the women becoming self reliant, the status of women in terms of being considered an equal partner in the work is not gaining importance in the family and the workplace."

Women in the profession of journalism enjoy no better status. Probably, this explains why the proportion of women journalism students greatly exceeds the proportion of women working in journalism. And that too, not just in India but the world over.

In the 54-year history of Pakistan, no woman has ever been an editor of an Urdu newspaper and only

two women have been editors of English daily. The book argues that the situation was no better even in India till 1960. Women were kept out of the newspaper industry on one pretext or another. Murthy and Anita paint a little too grim picture of women journalists in India. They cite a very interesting statement of Usha Rai, a noted journalist. In the words of Rai : "When I joined the Times of India, Delhi, in 1964 there was not a single woman on the editorial section of the newspaper...The only women in the newspaper were receptionists and telephone operators. There were no toilet for women on the editorial floor and I had to get to the telephone operators to borrow the key to use their toilet on the ground floor."

There is no denying that gender discrimination and the related problems are evident in the profession of journalism in India too. The Press Institute of India Report (2004) also states that women journalists are still limited to assignments of 'soft stories' such as fashion, lifestyle, art, cinema etc while men are assigned stories pertaining to more serious affairs such as political and economic. But the situation today is certainly not as grim as painted by the authors.

The book argues that women media persons are increasingly facing problems related to marriage and childcare. The respondents felt that their family life was being adversely affected in terms of recreation, childcare and so on. Interestingly, when most of the earlier Indian studies pointed out that women journalists were given 'soft' beats in contrast to their male counterparts, Murthy and Anita contradict this notion. The book concludes that in today's media scenario, women journalists are given male-dominated beats such as automobiles, crime, politics and business as well. This trend seems to be an offshoot of the proliferation of media channels in India. This finding is in concurrence with the job model as well. In job

model, women are assumed to perform as men to the extent that their organizational experiences are similar.

Also, the study reveals that unlike the scenario in 1970s and 1980s, more than 50 per cent of the respondents work till late hours in the office. However, the attitude of the women journalists has not changed in regard to socializing with their male colleagues. More than half of the respondents believed that the working women still face problems at their work places, although their belief varied from “strongly believe” to “mildly believe”. Well, good news for the women journo and their families! The book comes up with a very interesting revelation that the working women more or less feel that their male counterparts treat them well and most of the respondents are satisfied with their jobs. At the same time, however, only about one fourth of the respondents want their children to take up journalism as the first career choice. The book not only makes some thought provoking observations based on the survey but also gives suggestions to improve the working conditions for women journalists.

The book also discusses four very interesting case studies specifically related to the personal and professional stress of women journalists when it comes to striking a balance between their personal, professional and social commitments. The case studies depict that the women journalists suffer from health disorders due to problems of night shifts. Furthermore, these women are exposed to safety risk as the news organizations do not provide transport facility to the women journalists working in the night shifts. Women working in electronic media feel that unless their spouse is understanding, their career is bound to be adversely affected.

The book concludes by emphasizing the dire need to make the profession of journalism more attractive and lucrative so that more and more

youngsters join the media industry. These are the concluding remarks of the authors:

“... with proliferation of mass communication channels there is a need for the young talent to join these media organizations. The profession is increasingly creative and opportunities are aplenty. More number of people should be educated to take up a job related to the media. For this purpose, the departments of journalism and mass communication can take up the task of training the youngsters to seek employment in media industry.”

All in all, the book makes a good ‘read’ for media researchers, students and those interested in sociological studies. However, just like any other research-based study, this study too suffers from certain limitations as the results have been drawn from a very limited sample. Out of the total of 145 working women journalists in the chosen locale of the study, only 127 respondents filled the questionnaire. Also, as the study has been carried out in just three cities of Andhra Pradesh obviously the results reflect the issues related to working media women in these cities only. Thus, the study’s results cannot be generalized to all the working women professionals in India.

However, in all, the book’s makes a good read by virtue is its direct prose and laconic expression. Students of journalism, in particular, those researching in Gender Studies, should find the data useful and the research insights offered interesting. The research can be replicated in other regions of the country too to evolve a broader canvas for the research findings.

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