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WOMEN IN JOURNALISM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (A STUDY)

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Abstract:

Women journalists who entered this profession in 60's and 70's had to work and fight hard to escape from the professional ghettos into which stray women in the media were then customarily herded. A number of them managed to get into the coveted reporting stream, slowly making their way from flower shows to fires and eventually, event battle fronts of various kinds. They also forced newspaper establishments to contend with issues like maternity leave. Now, at the first decade of the century and millennium, women journalists seems to be everywhere streaming in and out of newspaper and magazine offices, bustling around in news rooms, and milling about wherever news of various sorts is being made. This trend shows women journalists do not have to undergo the same struggle as their counterparts in earlier years of entry. This research paper investigates the real situations presents to women journalists at now and the opportunities and challenges being faced by the women in journalism.

Key words: Women Journalists, working environment for women journalists, changing trends of journalism etc.

1.0 Introduction

There was a time when Indian women in media in only meant to be the easily available and eye candy kind of stuff be it in the form of eluding pictures or juicy spicy stories full of melodrama. This was the time during eighties and nineties. Where from mere reporting on flower shows in the 60's and 70's, women were put on to fashion, entertainment, and beauty in the 1990's. Eventually wide range of important events and processes relating to human rights, justice, development, society and culture became their beats. During late nineties due to changing government policies and increasing privatization, compromises with the standards of news materials and ethics of journalism began. The glass ceiling that operates in Indian journalism has been scrutinized in here. Women in journalism today report than analyze, more men editorialize than women. The few women in this country who sit in media boardrooms do so because of the privilege of birth. By and large the most of the women journalists is employed at the junior middle and feature editor levels. Several are columnists. Whereas if one looks at the Indian Television, the glass ceiling is far less pervasive than in the print media, according to the author. Their pervasive visibility on the TV screen in studios of editing rooms and in the decision making corridors of TV channels and major production houses has contributed substantially to the mainstreaming of women in this profession. The old assumption that women are cut for soft news and men for hard news is also debated. Some women are of the opinion that hard stories are easier to cover when compared to soft news. This is primarily because politicians are more than willing to be quoted and reports requires one to go through the press releaseas if one looks at the Indian Television, the glass ceiling is far less pervasive than in the print media, according to the author. Their pervasive visibility on the TV screen in studios of editing rooms and in the decision making corridors of TV channels and major production houses has contributed substantially to the mainstreaming of women in this profession.

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From a historical perspective, women journalists clearly have made great advances in the last two decades. Those who have not only faced all the difficulties like double duties and still have created a niche for themselves are like Mrinal Pande, Coomi Kapoor, Usha Rai, Pamela Philipose and Rasheeda Bhagat, women who were among the first to bread the male bastion and work their way up, despite these prejudices.

Their share of jobs in all media has increased, they are not restricted to fashion, cookery, art and culture but are also reporting from the battlefields, stock market and the Parliament's press gallery. In fact women journalists are radically changing the media and giving it a broader base by mainstreaming health, environment, social concerns and women's issues.

2.0 Literature Review

Talking about the beginning of women journalists on world scenario, it was more formally marked during the world war II, though may have existed earlier also. Journalists all around the world have effectively utilized the power of pen to tackle local as well as global challenges and women journalists have not been far behind pushing aside the remark of Hamilton, the Editor of The Daily Illustrated Mirror: "Women can't write and don't want to read." Though prominent and much revealing studies about the role of women journalists before and during the independence struggle in India could not be reached, but small percepts were available. Take for instance, Asian Age (31/3/2009) which carries a Photograph captioned- "Somnath with achiever". It goes on to elaborate- "Lok Sabha speaker Somnath Chatterjee with Vidya Munshi, the first women journalist of Kolkata, after giving her the women achiever's award during a programme organized by Ficci Ladies Organization in Kolkata in Monday...". It's good to honour veteran journalist like Vidya Munshi, but she was certainly NOT 'first woman journalist of Kolkata'. There were numerous women journalists in Kolkata before Vidya Munshi. To cite a few, in April 1870, Mokshodayani took out the first issue of Banga Mahilawhich was stood up for women's rights and pledged it would fight for women's causes. Swarnkumari Devi was the sole editor of Bharti from 1885-1905, 1909-1915. Her daughter Sarla Devi was also involved in this venture....If only due credit was given to the long forgotten (source; internet).

According to an internet source; Modern Review, 1911, the editor Ramanada Chatterjee shares his appreciating views about Sister Nivedita, as a brilliant, rare and one of very few women journalists available at that time. "She was, if one may be pardoned a trite epithet, a born journalist. She wrote with brilliance, vigor and originality and, even on commonplace themes, with something like inspired fervour. She could write with great facility and on a great variety of topics, and could therefore comply with the requests of many editors for her paragraphs and articles. But nothing that she wrote was commonplace; even the most hackneyed topics were invested by her pen with new power and grace, and became connected with the first principles of human action and with the primal source of all strength. She could never be a hireling, she would either write on topics of her own choice and when the spirit moved her, or not write at all.

From the very birth of this Review, she helped us with her contributions and suggestions and in other ways in a uncommon measure. Her unsparing criticism, in private conversation, of our shortcomings and faults, was of no less advantage to us. The sense of the value of all this help is daily growing upon us, and we feel that we must not try to give it inadequate expression. Would that all who are kindly were as unsparing in their criticism, and all who are severe critics as kindly and helpful as she! She was, indeed, a sister and she was Nivedita, dedicated to the service of all who came within the orbit of her life's way", said the Editor.

The only source which gives little information about Sister Nivedita is Mahamedha, a news paper of those days which used to publish from capital (www.sarcajc.com/Women_Jounalists_during_Bri.). One of its old edition on being scanned on 28 October 2009 confirmed the same day to be her birthday. The motto of this not well know Hindi newspaper reads- "satya, satya he kota hai". However the article in this paper did not throw light on her role as a journalist. Margaret Elizabeth Noble (Sister Nivedita) was born on October 28, 1868 in Ireland. Her family had close connection with the Irish freedom movement. Nivedita's journalistic works spread over more than decade & half. Many time she use different pseudonyms for her writing. Her early writings appeared in some provincial British journals and were on divergent issues,

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Sister Nivedita regularly contributed to New India, Dawn, Indian Review, Modern Review, Prabuddha Bharat, Hindu Review, Mysore Review, Behar herald, The Bengalee, East & west, Sindh Journal, Hindu, Balbharti, Amrit Bazar Patrika, Statesman, Advocate, Tribune, Maratha, Times of India and Bombay Chronicle.

The other name which claims to be the very **first lady journalist of Hindi in India was Devi Chaudhrani**, who shines like a star in the journalism world even today (www.sarcajc.com/Women_Jounalists_during_Bri.). She was not only a very eminent journalist, courageous professional but also a fearless revolutionary of that era. She was Hemant Kumari originally but her bravery and inbuilt strength led to her being called as Devi Chaudhrani. Born in 1868, *Hemant Kumari Devi* was daughter of the Shillong-based *Navin Chandra Rai*, a *Brahmo Samaji*. She was the first women journalist in Hindi, the editor of journal for women- *Sugrihini* which was published from Allahabad.

The Hindi belt even in those days was a backward area, where illiteracy amongst women was endemic and even within well-to-do families; most women did not receive any formal education. The *Brahmo-Samaj*, mind-set, which encouraged education of women, was undoubtedly a major factor behind the emergence of various publications. Hemant Kumari Devi's mother tongue was Bengali. She was educated in Roman Catholic convent in Agra and later in Lahore and Calcutta, she was also known as *Hemant Kumani Chaudharni*. In 1906, she went to Patiala, where she stayed till 1924 and was transferred to Dehradun as a Municipal Commissioner, where she died during 1953.

India's first women photo journalist was Homai Vyarawalla. Homai was born in Navsari, a Mafussil town in Gujarat. Her father was an actor from the Urdu-Parsi theatre. The family was poor and her parents packed her off to Bombay for further school and college studies. Homai took an Honours degree from Bombay University and a Diploma in Art from J J School of Art. Her excellent work and contribution to photo journalism is not only an icon to present generation but is unmatchable.

It is difficult to find words with which to pay tribute to the indescribable genius of Homai Vyarawalla. Always moving in joy and child-like simplicity, she produced her great photographs in an effortless and exquisite manner, which always reflected and radiated the ecstatic quality of her soul. Her work will continue to speak and proclaim for centuries. (Source: http://kzamembers.wetpaint.com)

This shows that though the contribution of females in journalism in India during a period around winning the Independence, was less in numbers but cannot be compared in terms of importance till date. The ladies at those time were not mere professionals but true citizens and patriotic for the nation. They not only reported the informative events necessary for success of freedom struggle, but promoted education, feeling of nationhood among the common man but worked for every good cause. They were social activists and dedicated themselves fully at the service of the needed.

3.0 Methodology

The major input of the study were views of female respondents which included issues and concerns which emerged based upon questionnaires filled and talks held before the questionnaire was designed. Added to that it includes expert views of few established male journalists also. The bulk of data under so many different heads with further sub divisions into specific indices initially seemed easy to read but proved arduous to analyze. Some of the questions were transcribed into tables using SPSS software, whereas others are a part of discussion, which follows below. The size of the respondent sample i.e. 34 and fact that we had to depend on questionnaire filled, except in some cases where extensive interviews were also taken and we could not have a cross section of journalists, thus placing limitations on the data. But still the results are important indicators in the views and perception of women journalists and male journalists which not only have impact on performances in news rooms but can help in creating a more promising and clean atmosphere in the coming days to welcome more women in this challenging and noble profession. There were about forty questions based upon socio-economic status and working conditions. These are tried at the level best to present below with the responses in the most revealing manner.

4.0 Data Analysis

1. To study the number of women interviewed and interpret useful results, the numbers were arranged as follows:

Table No. 1 Age Groups of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency of Female Journalists	% of Women
21-30	22	64
31-45	10	29
Above 45	2	7
TOTAL	34	100

For this research the population to be studied consisted of around fifty ladies to be interviewed working in different media. But due to availability of the respondents and time suitability a total of thirty four were interviewed. This included females from print media, news channels, radio stations etc. To give the study a direction the females were categorized into different age groups to assess the scope of entry for new comers during the past and present day. It can be easily seen that there were only two ladies above 45 years of age. Both of them are senior most, eminent and were first to be appointed in their particular firms. Miss. Renuka Naiyyar is reportedly to be the first lady journalist of Chandigarh who was appointed with 'The Tribune' approximately three decades back. Same was with Miss. Nirupama Dutt, who started working with 'Indian Express'. So, the thing which can be noticed is that although women have been a part of journalism even during independence struggle, but in Chandigarh formally after independence the entry of women started only around thirty years back. And the percentage was also very less. We can say it was a field totally run by men. The next thing is to be seen is the comparative increase in number of women in the next years can be estimated by looking at number of ten women in age group 31-45 and 22 women in age group of above 21.

The increase in the percentage of women in this field since the time of Miss. Naiyyar and Miss. Dutt can be attributed to the fast technology and education spread experienced by the whole nation. Moreover, the perception of the people in and out of the profession about journalism has changed quite a lot. This can be seen due to almost double number of young girls from age 21-30 years as compared to the rest two categories added together. So, we can say it has become more easy and favorable for girls to enter this profession as compared to passed days. But this can't be the only reason behind their increasing percentage.

The maximum number of females in the field are unmarried i.e. 22 out of 34. But, thing to be noticed is that all of them except 2 or 3 cases are between 21 to 30 years of age representing most suitable age to get married now a days.

Table No. 2 Marital Status

Martial Status	Frequency	% of Women
Married	11	32
Unmarried	22	65
Divorcee	1	3
TOTAL	34	100

Explaining more clearly, now a days almost every girl wants to be established independently first and then settled everywhere. So, despite all misnomers about the family life of journalists, we have found that they are living good and sound married lives. This has rarely to do anything with their profession. This was further proved by the fact that there is only one divorcee in the sample and who clearly stated that her reasons for separation have nothing to do with her field.

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3. Respondents were asked to mention the status of their native places. This was done as the society in which a person lives accounts for the atmosphere in which he/she is being brought up and received education. This further helps them in choosing any particular profession.

Table No. 3 Area From Where Respondents Hails

Inhabitation	Frequency	% of Women
Urban	34	100
Semi-Urban	0	0
Rural	0	0
TOTAL	34	100

Almost 100 percent of the women interviewed comes from urban places of living. Moreover, maximum are from Chandigarh and adjoining areas. This shows that when medical aspirants, engineers and professionals in other fields are coming from almost all sectors of society irrespective of rural or urban, journalism is still a platform not reached by rural people. This is a field mostly taught, chosen and pursued in urban or semi urban areas only. This may be the situation in Chandigarh only and may not be true everywhere.

4. Respondents were asked to mention the caste or category they belong to in the questionnaire. It helped in analyzing about the social setup of the journalists in Chandigarh. Almost all belong to general category.

Table No. 4 Caste/Category

Category	Frequency	% of Women
General	31	91
BC	0	0
OBC	0	0
SC/ST	0	0
Others**	3	9
TOTAL	34	100

There were two or three which ignored the question but not even a single one marked category other than general. Now what one can derive from this is that it is either more easier for the girls of castes belonging to general category to enter this field or girls from only these categories are aspiring mostly. Because gone are the days when people from reserved categories were with poor monetary conditions and offered less career opportunities. It may be true that even today a number of inhabitants in rural areas are not earning well be it Haryana or Punjab. But their share in the total population of their category is very less. Today people from reserved or other than general categories have left no stone unturned in almost every field.

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5. As in the beginning of the chapter itself was explained the main concern of the study is to draw maximum information about the social and economic status plus working conditions in the news channels, newspapers or better to say the infotainment sector of Chandigarh city. This will help in getting a clear idea about the working atmosphere and opportunities available in the profession to the common man which includes parents, relatives, neighbours of the upcoming journalists or even themselves. This will help in encouraging their fervor for the profession.

Salary Job Profile Work Envt. Overall **Satisfaction Level** No. % No. % No. % No. % 100* TOTAL 100* 100* 100*

Table No. 5 Satisfaction Level under Different Categories

Being a human, be it men or women one cannot be expected to be satisfied fully with what one have or not. But still, to know about whether the journalists are able to do the kind of work they desired to; the salary and work environment being provided and to assess the overall satisfaction regarding their profession the respondents were

asked to mark their satisfaction level on a ten point scale in increasing order from 1 to 10.

Salary:- The maximum number of respondents marked level 6 corresponding to a reasonable satisfaction. 2 to 3 were those who marked from 2 to 5, showing a low level of satisfaction. There are respectively 7 and 5 respondents who are satisfied upto a good level. And there was only one young lady, Shalini Gupta from Indian Express who marked level 10 depicting optimum satisfaction. She and many others told that in terms of money the English press is better paid for. Journalists in The Tribune were also mostly satisfied as it gives reasonable and sound salary to almost everyone. This good thing about the policy of Tribune was revealed by many. The astonishing fact was the only lady who marked lowest level i.e. 1 was a senior and established one. She kiddingly explained the reason that no one can be satisfied with the money they are provided. Actually, she said that it is now only that after spending 15 years in the firm she is earning a handsome salary, but during initial years and before her latest promotion what she was getting was not at all satisfactory.

Job Profile:- One thing which was revealed is that though one prefers to compromise with low salary but never with the quality of work being offered. This can be evidently proved on the account of 0 number of women marked against 1, 2 and 3 i.e. least satisfaction. They even mentioned it, that in journalism it is actually very important to be satisfied with the level of work you are doing in order to do justice to your work. There were two entries against 4, five against 4 showing a low level of satisfaction. Miss Priyanka Chopra working for the City Supplement of Dainik Bhasker was very excited to reveal her happiness about her profile. She has to report about lifestyles and fashion trends in society which people love to read about. So it is a natural part of her work to meet celebrities, visit malls

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and recreational spots. There were eight for level 6 showing reasonably good level of satisfaction. The maximum i.e. ten marked for level 8, showing good level of satisfaction. Only four and two marked for level 9 and 10 confirming very good satisfaction.

Work Environment:- To explain the more and more numbers of new entries in any field, the work environment matters a lot. There were only one or two entries for each level from 1 to 4. There were two to three entries for level 5-7. The maximum number of entries were ten for level 8. And for the highest level i.e. 9 and 6, there were respectively six for each. What can be evaluated is that least number are with lowest satisfaction. A little more numbers with a slightly increased level of satisfaction. But, the maximum falls under the good level of satisfaction i.e. showing good working environments.

Overall:- Apart from above mentioned criterions, there are many aspects which can be hold responsible for the increasing percentage of women in this profession. So there overall satisfaction was checked. The maximum numbers i.e. ten are for level 8, five for 9, one for 10 illustrating increasingly good level of satisfaction. The number of those who are less satisfied is also low i.e. zero for 1, two for 2, five for 5, five for 6 and six for 7. To explaining the pattern simply we can say maximum are in this job because they are highly satisfied.

6. In a world where men entered and established their monopoly much before the women could enter, how the women are looked upon and interacted in present era holds much importance. But, for women to be long time players and work easily men have definitely to respect and accept their identities.

Table No. 6 Type of Behavior Shown by Male Colleagues

Attitude of Male Colleagues	Frequency	% of Women
Frank & Cooperative	10	29
Helping But Professional	12	35
Neutral	6	18
Indifferent	0	0
Jealous	4	12
Arrogant	1	3
Others	1	3
TOTAL	34	100

Respondents were asked to mark any option out of five types of behaviors categorized. Ten out of 34 find their male counterparts very frank and cooperative. Maximum i.e. 12 out of 34 constituting 35% said that they are helping but equally professional also. 6 said that their male colleagues show neutral behaviors towards them. They have not any personal interests into their do's and that's. But no one was mentioned to be of indifferent attitude for their female counterparts. This itself explains that being the part of a team they have to work together, otherwise the organization may face a block in smooth functioning. So, why should the organization suffer on account of personal differences. However, four of them told that their male colleagues sometimes show jealous attitude when are unable to compete or are confronted with female excellences. One respondent very strongly wanted to state that some males are totally arrogant towards females and thus marked an added category on questionnaire. A young lady who have earned enough recognition was not satisfied with the classification of behaviors and said there must be no scope of being helped or frankness at professional places

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and so added that she behaves a totally professional attitude at work place with the male staff and that's the only way she wants to be reciprocated as.

7. Enquiring about the average duration of daily working hours of the journalists we came to know that it is the most uncertain, flexible and dynamic profession. There is not any limit to the extent of working hours. Sometimes it needs to be changed according to the demand of work, sometimes according to the nature of assignment or at other times you may have to work at flexible working hours to meet other deadlines. Mr. Raj Kumar Bhardwaj, Joint Editor of Nai Duniya said that there are no fixed working hours. In fact it is a twenty four hours job. Same was opinion of many female respondents. The point they want to make is journalism is not only what you write or speak. "It is actually the thinking process, routine and interaction you perform the whole day which creates news as output" said Mr. Bhardwaj. He further added it is not about the job you do but the way you live which accounts for working hours in this profession.

Working Hours Frequency % of Women 7-8 Hours 6 18 9-10 Hours 15 44 8-14 Hours 11 32 24 Hours 2 6 **TOTAL** 34 100

Table No. 7 Duration of Working Hours

The flexible working hours were reflected in the responses like six out of thirty four mentioned 7-8 hours, fifteen went for 8-14 hours, some for 9-10, other two for 24 hours and few of them simply mentioned flexible and were totally against binding this into fixed hours. The noticeable thing is they were not at all complaining about flexible hours but wanted to tell the hard reality that you are expected to work any time and for any duration being in the profession. And still all enjoyed their work. This is actually the requirement of the field and not a burden. For example, say Geetanjali Gayatri told that in the morning before coming to the office she has to go through more than two or three news papers which is not officially included in her working hours but definitely accounts for her work.

8. No doubt increased level of education, modernization and economic advances have leaned towards the gross increased percentage of females into media and infotainment industry, but these cannot work favourably until or unless things at actual work places changes into better. To make it more clear, the reasons for joining this field by aspirants can be many but for their long stay and successful working things at work places have to be supportive also.

Working Environment	Frequency	% of Women
Very Comfortable	16	47
Comfortable	16	47
Not Comfortable	2	6
TOTAL	34	100

Table No. 8 Working Environment at the Respective Work Places

16 out of 34 find it very comfortable to work in their particular organizations. Equal numbers i.e. 16 find it reasonably comfortable to work there in. And there were only 2 who very strongly stated that the conditions prevalent in the news rooms is very miserable and sometimes difficult to cope with. They have very strong reasons

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to advocate their views. One case was about a qualified girl who could not bear the arrogant, disgraceful and sometimes very dominating and harsh behavior of her senior editor. Another was about a lady complaining about the unprofessional and below expectation behaviors of the colleagues especially the females while at work. She was actually sad about the situations when the news turn into more like college cafeterias because of activities of tattletales who love to have snacks, parties and enjoy with a lot of noise makings. "This not only is uncivilized attitude but creates chaos in minds and decreases efficiency of work", she said. This brings to notice that this is not a fully spotless or devoid of any loop holes in terms of work environments.

5.0 Conclusion

No doubt the present century is synonym of technology, but equally valid is the second most famous saying of present days that it's "women's era". Be it the front of performance in any field, or the glorious achievements or the celebrations, the aforesaid sentence holds relevance. This has been felt not only by the 'warrior- ladies', by the supporting minds but also by those who find difficult to digest the growing share of their female counterparts in men's world.

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