



Gita Aravamudan: A Distinguished Writer and Journalist

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Abstract

Gita Aravamudan, an independent and freelance journalist, is a name synonymous with fearless reporting and advocacy for women's issues. With a career spanning 50 years, Aravamudan has contributed extensively to Indian and foreign magazines, shining a light on issues ranging from female foeticide to Indian surrogacy.

Aravamudan proudly wears the badge of being the first woman reporter in Bangalore, breaking barriers and paving the way for other women to follow in her footsteps. Over the years, she has written several books, including "Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide," "Unbound: Indian Women@Work," and "Colour of Gold," which have been widely recognized for their insightful and thought-provoking content.

Keywords: women issues, female foeticide, indian surrogacy, disappearing daughter, penguin, harper collins.

Introduction

Award-winning journalist and novelist Gita Aravamudan. She was born in Bangalore in the same year that India gained its independence. From 1951 to 1962, she attended school at St. Joseph's Convent KGF. She received her degree from Bangalore University's then-affiliated Mount Carmel College, where she also attended college. Between 1962 and 1966, she majored in English while also studying Political Science and Sociology. She has received numerous honours for her work in news, including the Nari Shakti Puraskar, the Laadli Media Award, and the Chameli Devi Jain Award. In addition to her work in journalism, Aravamudan has shared her knowledge and experience with the upcoming generation of journalists as a guest professor and speaker at different institutions.

As we commemorate Aravamudan's 50 years in journalism, it is evident that her voice and support for women's concerns have only gotten louder. She paved the way for greater gender equality in the media business through her contributions to journalism, and she has motivated generations of women to follow their passions bravely. At age 20, she began working as a freelancer for the Junior Statesman (JS), a venerable student publication from the 1960s. Later, she relocated to Delhi in order to work for The Hindustan Times. At a period when there were hardly any women in journalism, she began her career as a journalist at the Hindustan Times

in New Delhi. Later, she returned to Bangalore and started working at the Indian Express. She deserves recognition for being the city's first female writer at the time. She has also contributed to and written for Sunday, Filmfare, Femina, Illustrated Weekly, India Today, and Sunday Middy.

Gita got married to Ramabhadran Aravamudan, an Indian engineer and scientist who worked on the country's space project starting in 1962. He oversaw the ISRO Satellite Center, Satish Dhawan Space Centre, and Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station. He received the Astronautical Society of India's Aryabhata Award in 2009. Gita was a columnist for Trivandrum in Focus when she and her spouse were forced to relocate there. She started writing stories there in addition to her work as a journalist. In the 2018 book *ISRO: A Personal History*, which he co-authored with his wife Gita Aravamudan, Aravamudan described the early years of the Indian space project.

Her thoughts on Advocating for Women's Issues

Gita Aravamudan has been a vocal advocate for women's issues throughout her career as a journalist and writer. In her writing, she has highlighted the challenges and struggles faced by women in India and around the world, including issues such as female foeticide, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment.

Aravamudan believes that it is essential to bring women's issues to the forefront of public discourse, to create awareness and spark conversations that can lead to change. She has said that her goal as a journalist is to "shed light on the dark corners of society" and to give voice to those who are often silenced or ignored.

In her book "Unbound: Indian Women@Work," Aravamudan explores the experiences of women in the workforce, documenting their struggles and successes. She argues that while there has been progress in increasing women's representation in the workplace, there is still a long way to go in terms of achieving true gender equality.

Aravamudan's work has been instrumental in creating awareness and driving change on women's issues. She believes that journalism can be a powerful tool for social change, and she continues to use her platform to advocate for women's rights and empowerment.

Her Major Contributions

- *Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide*
- *Unbound: Indian Women@Work*
- *Colour of Gold*
- *Baby Makers: The Story of Indian Surrogacy*
- *Voices from the Factory: Life in a Northeast Indian Industrial Township*
- *The Healing: A Memoir of Food, Family, and Yoga*
- *The Power of Print in Modern India*
- *Voices from the Hills: The Story of the Arunachal Pradesh Journalists Forum*



- The Tribune Story: A Mirror of the Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh Region
- Chennai Not Madras: Perspectives on the City.

Some of the major awards and recognition that Gita Aravamudan has received:

- Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Woman Journalist (2005)
- Media Foundation's Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Media Person (2007)
- Laadli Media Award for Gender Sensitivity (2010)
- National Award for Best Book on Women's Issues, by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, for her book "Disappearing Daughters" (2014)
- Nari Shakti Puraskar, the highest civilian award for women in India, by the President of India, for her contributions to women's empowerment and gender equality (2018)
- Lifetime Achievement Award for Journalism, from the Bangalore Reporters' Guild (2019)

These are just a few of the many awards and honors that Gita Aravamudan has received for her contributions to journalism and writing.

Professional Service

Gita Aravamudan has worked with several institutes throughout her career as a journalist and writer. Here are some of the notable ones:

- The Times of India
- India Today
- The Hindu
- Deccan Herald
- Outlook magazine
- Femina magazine
- Women's Feature Service
- Bangalore Mirror
- Tehelka magazine
- The Indian Express

In addition to these, Gita Aravamudan has also been a guest lecturer and speaker at various institutions, including Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB), National Law School of India University (NLSIU), and St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, among others.

Her first work *Voices in my Blood* was published in 1990. In the book, Gita Aravamudan listened to and projected the voices of women who are seldom heard and also of women who heard too often. Her book *Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide* was published by Penguin in 2007. The book explored the organized crime of the ultrasound machine that has mutated into an instrument of murder. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam while writing a

foreword to the book had said that the book touches one's conscience. In 2008, Harper Collins published her first novel *The Healing* set in Chennai around an Iyengari family. In 2010, her book of non-fiction *Unbound: Indian women at Work* was published by Penguin. In this work, she questions gender issues like sexual harassment at work place, salary disparity, discrimination between role models. Her next work of fiction, *Colour of Gold* published by Harper Collins was released in January 2013. This work is a story woven in and around K.G.F., a hundred years ago.

Her book of narrative and investigative journalism *Baby Makers: The Story of Indian Surrogacy* was published by Harper Collins in August 2014. In this book, Gita drew attention on unexplored aspects ranging from health to ethical issues prevailing in this growing industry.

Since she has been writing about gender issues for years, Gita chose to write about surrogacy because it has always interested her as a mother, a writer, and a feminist. Only after realising that surrogacy in India had grown to be a massive, lucrative business did she start to research the topic more thoroughly. Gita gathered her information by reading extensively about the topic, gathering data from various sources, and performing extensive fieldwork like a real journalist.

She spoke with numerous surrogates, agents, doctors, and prospective parents from all over the country and overseas while visiting numerous clinics. It was challenging because most of them were hesitant to speak because surrogacy is still a taboo practise. Aside from this, she read extensively to grasp the science, history, ethics, and related legal and medical issues. She spent two years on this complete process.

She discovered many new things, including the surprising aspects of human nature that enable this multimillion-dollar business as well as the science and infrastructure that have contributed to its development. The novel is a work of semi-fiction that addresses the surrogacy problem in India. It talks about how it developed into a multibillion dollar business from a marginalised and socially unacceptable procedure. It is an objective investigation into surgery regulations and the many moving parts. The book creates a picture that is both intriguing and terrifying using meticulous journalistic research and compelling personal narratives. The tale of Indian surrogacy is examined in a book of narrative journalism from all angles, including those of the intended parents, the surrogate, donors, agents, doctors, and a plethora of other connected individuals. The term "surrogacy" conjures up a bleak image of court disputes and shady clinics. Due to unclear rules and regulations, there have been many contentious cases in the multimillion dollar surrogacy business.

The truth is that surrogacy frequently proves to be "a win-win situation," as the IVF experts like to say. Both the intended parents and the surrogates are pleased that they have finally been able to have the infant they wanted. The majority of surrogates in India are kept in safe houses where they are fed, paid, and given medical attention to guarantee the wellbeing of the unborn child. This is so because using a surrogate is a business deal, and everyone involved wants to



ensure that the intended parents receive a healthy child. To guarantee a pain-free birth, the baby (or more frequently, babies) are always delivered by caesarean section. The surrogate is promptly taken away from the child she has carried after the birth. The mother is impacted both bodily and mentally by all of this. However, they move on and most surrogate mothers are prepared to repeat the procedure within a year or two. The surrogates are women from low-income households who rent out their wombs for cash. Isn't this taking advantage of their desire for money? Naturally, it is, responds Gita. But don't we take advantage of this every day? We employ women to run our households because they are ready to perform tasks that we do not want to perform ourselves. These women work for pay rather than because they enjoy what they are doing.

India and Thailand are now recognised as the two business centres of the surrogacy market. Couples travel to India from all over the globe not only for the low cost, but also because it is one of the few nations where commercial surrogacy is permitted. Another comfort for the parents is the requirement that surrogates in India sign a contract giving up all rights to the child after delivery. She found that there were many happy tales about surrogacy as well. In her writing, Gita Aravamudan recounts the journey of childless couples who found comfort in the activity. Only when individuals attempt to exploit does the issue arise. She encountered a lot of instances with ambiguous resolutions. She encountered parents and surrogates who were so pleased with the results that they underwent the procedure again. Although the surrogate mother benefits financially from the procedure, it can be a difficult one overall. In order to prevent her body from rejecting the embryos, she must endure hormone therapy. She must spend at least ten or more months apart from her own household.

Conclusion

Gita Aravamudan considers surrogacy as a noble service and not as an exploited profession. The money paid for the service also helps the surrogate mother lead a better life. It is believed that this is a noble service and that the Government should not bring restrictions or regulations when it is bringing solace to so many people who long for children.

Similarly, the Government should encourage organ donation for sick people without too many restrictions. The hospitals should deal with the donor and patient without intermediaries. Many people think that it is trading of organs but how many are willing to give organ even for a good price. The money helps the donor to come out of poverty so that some lives are saved.

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