

New roles, old responsibilities split Indian families wide open

PROFILE

GITANJALI PRASAD

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Gitanjali Prasad toyed with the idea of writing a book since she was 20. It took her some time to fine-tune the concept before she finally put pen to paper. *The Great Indian Family: New Roles, Old Responsibilities* is the first book by the author who has spent a considerable time in the field of journalism.

For Prasad one single line has proved to be true for the Indian system: "It is so easy for a man to have a career as well as a family life, but it is equally difficult for a woman to manage both, in a society which has 50 per cent women." This is what Gitanjali Prasad explores in her book that she began writing in 2003.

Why write such a book dealing with familial complexities? "Two issues surface in the present-day scenario. Firstly, there is lesser security at the workplace. Constantly, a person is judged based on the skills that he or she may or may not have. That puts a lot of pressure on the individual. Many more factors govern progress in the workplace today than before," says the erudite author. Secondly, she points out, the family today is under much more threat because women never receive any recognition or reward for the work they do at home. This is the era where mother-in-laws too are working and the fact that there is just nobody at home disturbs Prasad. And despite this chaos in the family system, Prasad feels, "the concept of paying women for their household work is just no



Author of *The Great Indian Family: New Roles, Old Responsibilities* Gitanjali Prasad with actress Nea Gupta and director of Tata Sons, Dr J.J. Irani at the launch of the book in Mumbai

has to grapple with on a day-to-day basis that has its repercussions visible in the long run. So, she has taken into account the ideas from the West as also the examples from the by-gone days and has examined it all in a nuanced manner. Prasad feels that there are too many ideas stuffed together in her maiden literary effort which the *India Today* has labelled as "a compendium on the family".

Every generation leaves something for the next and *The Great Indian Family: New Roles, Old Responsibilities* is what Prasad wants to leave for the

next generation "so that they don't make the mistakes that our generation made".

The book examines the stress factor involved in the joint families as a result of the complex nature of the tussle between career and family life that especially engulfs women. But among all other things that contribute to the stress factor, Prasad blames the unpredictable nature of the workplace. This, elaborates Prasad, is the real cause for all the evils that are slowly burning the Indian households.

"Companies today, I believe, follow the 'Buy One, Get One Free' syndrome,

where the company expects the duties of a wife to come along free with the person employed. This is indeed ridiculously rampant and I strongly feel that it is a major reason why there is so much stress in the families," explains Prasad.

"Women aren't happy doing just the traditional roles and so there needs to be more scope to improve their lifestyles and thereby the situation in the family as a whole. Only then could we ensure that there is indeed a fine balance in the way career, family and responsibilities are juggled," concludes a hopeful Prasad.

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