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Profile of Radhika Ramachandran

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Dr. Radhika Ramachandran
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Dr. Ramachandran research interests include: atmospheric boundary layer processes, cloud microphysics, atmospheric convection, climate change, remote Sensing of the atmosphere, land atmosphere ocean coupling & interaction, tropical meteorology, monsoon dynamics, and numerical weather prediction. Other areas of interests include: science administration and space policy.

Previous to her position as Counsellor (SPACE) and Technical Liaison Officer, Dr. Ramachandran was the Technical Liaison Officer/Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Space/Indian Space Research Organisation, Branch Secretariat in New Delhi and a Scientist at Boundary Layer Physics Branch, Space Physics Laboratory, ISRO Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India.

Dr. Ramachandran had a Postdoctoral Fellowship in 'Numerical Mesoscale Modelling' at the North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina. She also has a Ph.D. in Physics on 'Studies on Atmospheric Boundary Layer' from the University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram, India, a Masters of Science (M.Sc.) in Physics, Specialization - Applied Electronics from the University of Kerala, and Bachelors of Science (Physics, Chemistry & Mathematics) from the University of Kerala.

1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

My basic training has been in physics; and specialisation in atmospheric sciences. But for the last five years I have been into managerial work in the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). In the organisation there is a system whereby they choose Scientists and Engineers in a senior cadre for scientific administration. I was selected as a Technical Liaison Officer in the ISRO office in Paris. Prior to this, I had a brief stint in the same area, more or less, in the ISRO office in New Delhi.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

I have been able to assimilate modern technology in the day to day implementation of my official responsibilities thanks to my technical background. Also I find that I can contribute more effectively in international forums whether

it be on Policy matters; incorporation of peaceful uses of outer space activities or representing ISRO in international charter meetings. I feel that Women in general communicate more effectively and are better managers. These two aspects make it possible to deliver your responsibilities more effectively and in an innovative manner.

3) What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced?

I am the first lady ever to be appointed as the Technical Liaison Officer in the ISRO Liaison Offices abroad and so that in itself is a challenge.

Apart from that the most gratifying work that I have accomplished in my twenty-five years of service in ISRO, pertaining to my field of speciality, was developing a comprehensive atmospheric model for thunderstorm prediction. This model can ingest real time weather data in to it and give short time forecasts of thunderstorms, very effectively on a parallel computer. This is being used successfully during launch campaigns of ISRO since prediction of thunderstorm is very important for launch operations.

4) What was the greatest obstacle?

The greatest difficulty that I have experienced is when I have to divide my time between being a 'home-maker' and a 'career- woman' since I had to handle these two aspects single handed, especially during my postings away from my hometown where is no other support system from family members, friends etc; Perhaps had this impediment not been there then I would have been able to do better.

Also recognition of merit does not come easily for a woman from senior colleagues and male peers, since they always feel that they are not contributing enough to their work due to preoccupation with family welfare. It indeed takes quite a bit of determination, courage and perseverance for a woman to get accepted by male colleagues and seniors up the corporate ladder.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

Space Exploration is one area that is going to have revolutionary changes in the next few years, with modern technology and increasing general awareness among youngsters. One can anticipate colonisation of moon, mars etc, environmental monitoring, solutions to global warming etc happening in the near future.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

To be update about what is happening in your area of work one must never let go the 'learning' phase in one's life; you need to know the state-of-the-art in all relevant fields of work. In short one must realise that 'knowledge is power and

that there is no substitute for hard work'. Take every opportunity given to you as a challenge and do it to the best of your ability, never eying any financial or materialistic benefits. Have confidence and faith in yourself. Recognition then will come naturally.