

ISSUES OF GENDER ROLES IN POLICING IN INDIA: A CONTRADICTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

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Abstract: Gender roles are very strongly perceived by a nation like India, which prides to be progressive but drifts back to primitivism time and again shielding itself under the sheets of culture and tradition. A strict code of conduct has been etched for ages in the minds and living style of every man and woman regarding how they ought to be. These traditional protocols extend even to the work settings and places of professions. Even though there have been attempts and fervent struggles to achieve and help attain an equal status for women, these attempts have not been quite helpful.

Policing is one such area of work which has run for ages as being a male dominant profession. The need for more women officials have been felt for, now after decades of deliberation. Though women have been a part of policing their role have most often been conventional and they were not considered ferocious enough for every challenge that the profession brought along with it. The present work emphasizes on previous works that has focused on the "Issue of Gender Roles in policing" and attempts to contradict this issue with the privileges extended to each gender in accordance with their basic Human Rights. The sources basically are limited to previous studies on the subject in the form of articles, published papers and book references and the writers understanding of basic human rights regulations.

Keywords: Women Police, Gender Roles, Equality, Non-Discrimination, Rights.

Introduction: The profession of policing has seen many path breaking evolutions since its inception, one of which has been the inclusion of women under its wings. Though this has been a major step throwing open the male encased boundaries of law enforcement for women in the 1800s, women then and now are to a large extent underutilized as police personnel (Mangai Natarajan, 1996). The ignition to this involvement of women into policing had been in the role of disciplinarians for young girls and children even when one historically reviews the global literature. This frame of a police woman continues to pre-exist in the societal minds as well as in the core perception of their co-workers.

In India men in general view women as a specie which needs to live within parameters and be safeguarded, and when they venture into professions like law enforcement, the same idea may continue, or it goes to the other extreme where they are burdened with additional responsibilities as a retribution for straying into a male-dominant profession being a woman. The same phenomena has been observed universally. In countries like Pakistan women in uniform are not allowed to even step out of the police station without a male officer on their guard (Farhat Taj, 2004).

This paper is an attempt by the researcher to answer some social and professional questions that rises out of the idealisms prevalent in the society regarding the role of women in a community. How their defiance of the set norms regarding their choice of profession, though essential, affects them adversely? And most essentially how these adversities are a well-fortified

contradiction to their documented rights by the virtue of being human?

Objectives

- To analyse the variations in the number of men and women in police forces.
- To understand the reasons for the numerical variations and highlight the social and professional challenges women face.
- To state the contradiction in reality to the documented laws on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

Methodology of Study

Sources and Techniques of the Data Collection: The current work is primarily based on information and statistical information procured from reliable sources such as National Crime Reports and other content derivatives like journals, books, newspaper articles/editorials, internet polls/surveys etc., the contents from all these sources were carefully reviewed and compared to deduce to the desired answers from the available channels.

Statistical Bifurcation of Men and Women Police Officers:

The total sanctioned strength of civil police including district armed police for the year 2012-13 has been 1786112 out of which women were sanctioned 62155 posts all over India. While the actual recruitment of officials that happened were 1348984, women recruited were 100756 (*Sources: Crime in India, 2013*). Even though the actual strength of women is relatively more than the sanctioned strength, women constitute only to (7.4%) of the total strength of police personnel. Eighteen states have less than (5%) of women police out of the total 28 Indian states. The Government is working on Policy

measures to raise this number to at least (33%) women of total police strength in all states. About 5 states, Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Sikkim have reservation policies to recruit a minimum of (30%) or more women in police (Source: NIPSA).

In the early 2013, the Ministry of Home Affairs passed the proposal by the Delhi police to raise the number of women in police forces by 2000 to meet the (25%) representation issued by the Ministry as a mandate, realizing the crux the capital faces. This was to be done by scrapping 500 hundred posts reserved for men and these women were to guard business centres and malls and other frequently visited sites by women (*Times of India*, 19th Aug, 2013). The Goa police took a similar initiative in the mid 2014 to combat crimes against women, observing the enthusiasm amongst girls to be a part of the forces (*Times of India*, 02nd May, 2014). There were also plans to build pressure on the state governments by the MHA to revive the (33%) quota for women in state police (*The Asian Age*, May, 2014). In spite of all these attempts in the last decade the number of police women have been far off the official mark, irrespective of the fact that there have been rapes in buses, abandoned places, abductions and rapes and torture of women in custody. Inspections also brought to light that there one woman cop for every 15 thousand people in India (*Times of India*, Sept, 2013). The fact also remains that attempts and planning though made, most often are only on papers and far from reality.

Social and Professional Challenges as per Literature: Based on the details above it is crystal that the need for women in uniform is being felt but it is difficult to understand the reason for its sedated growth- whether it is the lack of enthusiasm in the system for incorporating women? Or does the distaste come from women, who are unwilling to accept the personal and professional shortcomings following their recruitment? A BPR&D Research Report, 2012 suggests that women prefer policing as a last resort and even when they join forces they are in a constant hunt for other professional options. As per a research study of Government of India fellowship scheme "Mahila Police: Bhoomika Nirvehan aur Karya Santusht", 2012 carried out in UP (Meerut and Gorakhpur) women face the following social and working problems while in police force:

(i) *Social problems*

- Issues with raising children, improper facilities
- Lack of time to meet with family commitments.
- No stipulated working hours.
- Non acceptance from family and relatives and low reputation of women in police from rural areas.

(ii) *Workplace related problems*

- Misbehaviour from common masses.

- Heavy work load.
- Improper utility facilities for women in stations.
- Lack of promotion avenues.
- Issues during training.
- Government accommodation
- Insufficient wages.
- Problem of transport.
- Problem of leave.

Equality and Non-Discrimination as per Indian and International Norms: Equality and Non-Discrimination on the bases of gender or any other grounds has always been strongly criticized and non-acceptant nationally and internationally after the United Nations attempt to uphold the cause of Human Rights. Some of these international prerequisites and the national attempts to incorporate these international norms are as follows:

(A) *Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women,*

Some of the articles of the convention that deals with equality or non-discrimination of women in professional, social, political, cultural and educational activities are as under:

Article 3: Political, social, economic, cultural equality with men for full development and advancement of women.

Article 4: Implementation of special measures for accelerating de facto equality between men and women, not considering it as discrimination as per the convention. These measures are to be discontinued once the desired objectives are achieved.

Article 5(a): Modification of Social and Cultural patterns of conduct with a view to achieve elimination of prejudice and customary practises based on the stereotyped roles of men and women.

Article 7(b): participation in formulation of government policies and implementation thereof, and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

Article 10: Equal rights to education, vocational training, opportunities in sports and physical education and any other learning or training.

Article 11: Right to work, same employment opportunity, same criteria for selection, freedom of choice of profession, equal benefits, remuneration, health conditions, social security, paid leave etc.

(B) *The Constitution of India and Non-Discrimination*

The Constitution of India provides for equality of status and opportunity to all citizens in the country. The following provisions in the Constitution relate to gender equality:

Article 14: Equality before law and equal protection of laws.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of race, sex, etc.

Article 16: Equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment.

The following *Directive Principles* in the Constitution also specifically relate to gender equality:-

1. Article 39(a): That the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
2. Article 39(d): That there is equal pay for equal work for both men

The Contradiction in Reality: Despite all the above regulations available the true picture for portrayal and in practise are contradictory

A news report of 2013, disclosed that often while the departments paint a rosy picture about the working conditions provided to workers the genuinity of the issue is far away from being picture perfect. Police women working in Delhi police stations reported being overburdened with work and having no stipulated work hours. What makes these conditions worse is the facilities within the stations including sanitization and availability of a separate rooms during late hours of work. No proper drop facilities during late night duties and for women with children lack of leave availability. Though there are some concessions for women at the IPS ranks but not for officials in lower ranks. There is no proper safeguard and quick actions taken on the complaints by them, in fact it is most often ignored. With all the issues and overload they are also underpaid considering the responsibilities to handle (*India Today*, 7th August, 2013). There have also been issues of sexual harassment by male co-workers and seniors.

The highest numbers of women across ranks are in the position of constabulary and suffer the worst working conditions. Women are very often reluctantly included into the main stream policing. They are not accepted by male co-workers. According to a research study conducted by National Commission for Women on "*Opinion of Male Police Personnel Regarding the Role of Women Colleagues*", men in police forces believed that "*women need not be integrated into mainstream policing, they should be given specific tasks related to women and children, they are not too keen about their jobs, they are better off working as cooks in police mess, they should not be allowed to escort male offenders, they should be excluded from operations against insurgents, extremists and militants, they are not capable of handling hardened criminals due to their gentle demeanour*".

Shortcomings in Enforcement: The problem lies not with formulation of strategies and norms but with their fierce implementation. Rules are at place but for the mere sake of documentation. The gap between formation and application of these regulations are miles apart. Initiatives are being taken

but not to its complete effect. Proper facilities in stations are now being implemented but its maintenance is quivering.

Mobile facilities for women on patrol is an essentiality. Basic amenities are necessary for a good performance of an employee at a workplace. Other than which strict actions against harassments at workplace, overloading with work is a must. Demeaning and derogatory remarks from colleagues are not paid heed to by seniors or responsible authorities. Further, perception of self as being feeble and helpless, in the minds of their co-workers and society can stop women in police from airing their complaints.

Strengthening the Grounds for Women Policing: *Considering the increasing crime trends it is an essentiality to have women as a part of policing for the following reasons:*

- Women are observed to be excellent communicators as per researches
- They can resurface victorious from tricky situations very tactfully.
- The calm and sober demeanour that they care may help them keep emotionally under control in aggressive situations.
- Some researchers also shows that women are less corrupt as compared to male officials.

Some steps that could be taken to prevent the loss women from policing:

- The foremost step has to be taken in changing the mind-set of the community about women and their role that is observed to be set in the mental framework of the community for which awareness programmes and interactive sessions with parents and direct families of women who aspire to be a part of policing is a must.
- There are steps taken for improvising facilities at workplace like proper toilet facilities and in some places crèches are also available for children in headquarters but these should be adopted nationwide.
- Training programmes should be conducted for male co-workers to help them accept their female counterparts into mainstream policing and facilitate gender sensitivity.
- Complaints of discrimination and harassment should be paid careful attention to and immediate action should be taken. Though some police station has initiated such a facility where women officials can report their grievances it needs to be a much more prominent practise.

Conclusions: Women have proved time and again, despite of all the restrictions that they are capable of excelling in every walk of life. And policing is no exception for them. It is true that change needs time and beliefs etched for ages in the minds and behaviours take time to be overwritten. But the

system needs to be progressive enough to note and understand that change is necessary and adhere to it accordingly. This paper has been the researchers attempt to put forth what is a common knowledge about women who want to be a part of law enforcement but retard back considering the

consequences. It is an appeal to masses and system alike that excellence is a phenomena common to both men and women, provided a fair opportunity is given.

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