

WOMEN IN POLICE SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF ALL WOMEN POLICE STATION, ASSAM

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Abstract:

Police is considered to be a profession which is for men. It is a symbol of patriarchy. With the entry of women in all fields of social life, they also entered Police service. But, the number of women in police is very low. One important step towards empowerment of women police is the establishment of All Women Police Stations. These police stations are staffed mainly by women police personnel. In this paper, a case study of All Women Police Station Panbazar, the only women police station of Assam has been included. It shows that even if women are regarded as equal within police, in reality they face various problems at their workplace which hinder in their advancement. This study will try to assess the reasons for it. The study shows a tremendous increase in the number of registered cases in that police station which may be the result of the increase in crime against women and children or it may be because of the increased awareness of women. This study will try to analyse the relationship between women, gender role and police.

Keywords: Gender, Gender role, Sensitisation

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1. Introduction:

In every society, there is the need for a mechanism for maintaining law and order. Police is such an organisation which is present in all societies. Policing has always been regarded as a male domain in India as it requires physical power. However, with the gradual entry of women in every sphere, their entry is also seen in the police service in India. But, their number is very low. A UN Women report of 2011 estimates that, “globally, women average just 9 percent of the police, with rates falling as low as 2 percent in some parts of the world. On average, women do not make up more than 13 percent of the police force in any region”¹. If we look at the all India level, there are only 7.28 percent women Police². In case of Assam, there are 5.47 per cent women police³. The growing crime against women, involvement of women in various crimes and the problems of juveniles has showed the need for women police in India. The women police are now an integral part of Indian police force. If we look worldwide, women police was first appointed in the New York, USA. In case of India, women police was first recruited in Kanpur in 1939, but the need for women police was really felt after independence only. In our country, number of women police has been tremendously increasing. In addition to the expansion of women police in various states, there is the existence of police stations exclusively manned by women police. Kerala has the first women police station of India (1973). Despite growing cases of crime against women, State governments have failed to open enough women’s police stations. There were a total of 632 Women Police Stations in the country as on 01.01.2017.⁴ Among these, more than 30 per cent were functioning in Tamil Nadu State alone with a total of 203 Women Police Stations. Assam has only one women police station. This study will try to analyse the importance of women police station in Assam and how it is functioning. At the same time, it will also look into the problems faced by women police working in that police station and whether they are having equality with male police or not.

ShamimAleem’s book, “Women in Indian Police” (1991) is the result of the comprehensive study of more than five year. Here, he has presented a study of women working in state police force, women IPS who belong to all India services and women working in CRPF. He has tried to

¹ UN Women (2011-2012) Progress of The World’s Women: In Pursuit of Justice, <http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/EN-Report-Progress.pdf>

² Data on Police Organisation, published by BPRD in 2017

³ Data on Police Organisation, published by BPRD in 2017

⁴ Data on Police Organisation, published by BPRD in 2017

analyse the historical background of women in police and also provided an analysis of various policies of state governments. This book provides an understanding of the functioning of police women working in various states by analysing the life situations of the women police.

“Women Police in a Changing Society: Back Door to Equality” written by Prof. MangaiNataranjan, talks about the development of women police in the past twenty years. The author after going through twenty years of research done in Tamil Nadu offers a view of the role of women police. He talks about the changes from traditional Indian society to a capitalist, democratic state which have greatly affected women working as police officers also. He talks about the role of women police in a traditional culture which is different from that of the western countries.

AmarjitMahajan, in his book “Indian Police Women” (1982) has provided an analysis of the role and functions of women police in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Chandigarh. He has taken 153 samples for his study and divided them into old and new on the basis of their recruitment. He relates his theory to the role theory and tries to understand functioning of women police. In his study, he found that role of women police has not been recognised yet by the male police and the society. He believes that police women’s role can be more attractive if it is made to resemble the role of a social worker.

S. K. Ghosh, in *Women in Policing* (1981) talks about the functions and roles of women in police. The author himself was an IG of police and being a police officer himself, he has in depth knowledge about the department. He tries to analyse the role of women police around the world and their history and talks about functions and service conditions of women police in India. He talks about three major periods of history of women police. First period is when the police department hired women police to search female suspects or prisoners, but they were without power and with a minimal pay for every search. Second is characterised with gradual acceptance of women police because of their ascribed roles like protecting women and juvenile from evil force. And third period emphasises on the equality of men and women in all types of police work. He discusses the discriminations faced by women police in India and also discusses about their future in India.

2. Objectives:

This paper has the following objectives:

- To analyse the various roles of the All Women Police Station, Panbazar.
- To analyse the problems faced by women police working in Women Police Station

3. Methodology:

This study is mainly based on a case study of All Women Police Station, Panbazar. Together with this, 15 women police officers are interviewed who are of different rank and serving in that police station. After the data are collected, all the data are analysed.

4. All Women Police Station, Panbazar: An Overview:

As per the notification of the Government published in 22nd September 1993, Dispur, the Governor of Assam declared the establishment of a Women Police Station. This newly created Women Police Station was declared to be known as “All Women Police Station Guwahati.” This Notification came into force with effect from the 2nd Oct 1993. In the schedule I of the notification, the area of the police station were specified i.e. the Guwahati Municipal Corporation area. The Staff of the Police Station are drawn from the Women Police force of the state.

In schedule II of the notification, the offences covered by the police station are included. These are:

- Indian Penal Code:- Sections-
304(B), 306, 312, 313, 314, 354, 363, 363(A), 364, 365, 366(A), 366(B), 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 376, 376(A), 376(B), 376(C), 376(D), 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 498(A), 500, 501, 502, 509 etc.
- Police Act Section- 34
- Indian Railway Act-
Section 95- Delay and detention in Transit
- Suppression of immoral traffic in women and girls act 1956
- Child marriage restraint Act 1929
- Dowry Prohibition Act 1961
- Offences relating to eve teasing
- The Assam Disorderly Houses Act 1936

- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 and Rules 1987
- Any other Act enacted and rules framed in connection with the crimes against women/girl where police can take cognizance.

Thus, it shows that the All Women Police Station deals with the cases relating to problems of women and children like eve teasing, dowry death, cruelty by husband, immoral trafficking, suicide, cases under Information Technology Act etc.

If we look at the importance of women police station, we can say that as these police stations are exclusively manned by women police personnel, it gives them the opportunity to perform all kinds of police work. At the same time, in a women police station, a woman victim will feel comfortable to come and lodge a complaint. They will feel free to speak about any harassment or cruelty faced at household or in public sphere.

At present, the All Women Police Station has 22 numbers of police women out of which, one is inspector, one sub-inspector and the rest are constabulary level. The Officer-in-Charge of this police station is of Inspector rank. It shows that in the women police station, maximum number of women police are of constabulary level.

The following table will give an idea of the nature of cases registered in women police station in Assam over the years.

Table no 1

CASES REGISTERED IN ALL WOMEN POLICE STATION PANBAZAR:

YE AR	TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES REGISTE RED	SECTIONS & NUMBER OF CASES REGISTERED											
		498A IPC	354	366	376	DOWR EY DEAT H	EVE TEA SING	IMMORAL TRAFFICKI NG(P) ACT	ABEDEN T OF SUCIDE	OTHER IPC	POC SO ACT	304 (B)	INFOR MATIO N TECHN OLOGY ACT
1993	23	10		05	02					06			
1994	42	19		07	03					13			
1995	45	30		04	02	01				08			
1996	34	24		02	01	01				06			
1997	41	32			03					06			
1998	45	25	05		03	01		04		07			

1999	72	45	03	03	05	01	02			13			
2000	32	16	02	01			03	01	01	08			
2001	46	33	01	02	01					08		01	
2002	57	41	09	01	03					03			
2003	46	32	06	02	02			01		03			
2004	28	21		02				01		04			
2005	30	25	01	02						02			
2006	35	23	05					06		01			
2007	41	25	05	01	05			04		01			
2008	107	79	21	03	02			02		01			
2009	149	112	14	01	03			02		17			
2010	174	135	13	04	03			12		07			
2011	101	88	05	03	03					02			
2012	163	121	20	04	06			02		10			
2013	216	149	40	03	13					10			01
2014	138	90	13		09					19	02		05
2015	102	64	12	01	02					18	03		02
2016	219	143	40	02	09			01		16	07		01
2017	334	203	70	06	16		01			23	09		06
2018	317	197	68	03	21	01				10	10	02	05

From the above table, it is clear that the number of cases registered in Women Police Station Panbazar has been increasing. If we look at the growth of last ten years, there is a trend of tremendous growth of registered cases in women police station. There may be two reasons for this. Firstly, the growing awareness of the people specially the women suffering and secondly the increased number of cases of violence against women and children.

We can see that the highest number of cases registered over the year is of 498A section of IPC which is about cruelty to women by husband or relative of husband. Other cases relating to section 354, 366, 376 and other IPC also contain large number. It may be noted that the cases relating Information and Technology Act 2000 and POCSO Act 2012 are also now coming up. However, the cases of eve teasing are very rarely reported.

5. Problems faced by the Women Police:

Women police have two major roles to play, firstly as police personnel and secondly as a wife, mother or daughter. People cannot operate equally well in all the role situations. Accordingly, policewomen's life is also affected by these role conflicts. To understand these role conflicts and

other problems faced by women police in performing their roles, 15 women police are interviewed. These will be discussed in detail below.

- ***Attitude of family member:***

To know whether the family members of the police women support their working in police or not, they were asked about the attitude of the family members. It was found that a large majority of 73.33 per cent women do not have any objection from their family. Out of the remaining respondents, only 6.67 per cent expressed about negative attitude of family and 20 per cent expressed that their attitude is indifferent.

- ***Attitude of society:***

More than half of the respondents (60%) say that the attitude of the society is negative. They do not want to accept women in police. They think police to be involved in corruption always. The rest feel that people have positive attitude towards women working in police. They get respect from the common people.

- ***Status:***

To know the status of women police, they were asked- “what do you feel about police women’s status in police?” Regarding this, about 60 per cent women police said that their status is same as male police while others regard their status to be secondary.

When they are asked as to why the number of women police is low, 40 per cent respondents said that this is because of the attitude of the society. 33.33 per cent said that the number of women police is low because police is traditionally regarded as men’s profession. 26.67 per cent respondents believe that low number of women is present because women employment in police is of recent origin.

- ***Working Condition:***

While doing the study, the respondents were asked about the additional facilities they are having. Regarding occupation, 80 per cent of the respondents are having official residence. Other 20 per cent have to manage for their housing of their own. Regarding the sanitary facilities in their work place, 93.33 per cent of them are not satisfied. They expressed that they do not have any option

but to stay in the police quarters, because now a days it has become very expensive to stay at rented house. But they said that the condition of the quarters is very poor. These quarters are very congested and at the same time, there is no provision for proper water facilities.

Career advancement is important in any service. Regarding the promotion policy in the police department, 86.67 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the present promotion policy which is on the basis of seniority and according to them; there is no bias in matter of promotion in the police service. Although majority of the respondents reacted positively about the promotion policy, still it is seen that promotional avenues have number of disadvantages. The respondents were asked about the number of promotions they received and it is surprising to know that about 80 per cent of them did not receive any promotion at all. To get only one promotion, it takes about more than 10 years.

Regarding salary, there is a negative reaction among the respondents. It is seen that majority of women are having dissatisfaction with the current pay.

From the opinion of the respondents regarding leave facilities, it is seen that majority of them (73.33%) expressed their dissatisfaction. Those who were dissatisfied said that it is very difficult to get leave in police service. Their leave is not sanctioned by the supervisors. In police, most of the time, their leave permission is withheld at the time of any festival or any special occasion. They feel that women have their own personal problems. Women who are married and have children may need leave for any personal problem. But such types of issues are not taken care of. Respondents were also enquired about Police duty. Most of the respondents (53.33 per cent) did not show any dissatisfaction regarding working hours. They said that they had no ground of complaining, because at the time of joining itself, they knew about the working hours in police service. However, they feel that night duty is a problem for women police.

Regarding the physical aspects, large majority of women expressed dissatisfaction. Only a small percentage of women are satisfied. Some respondents said that at the place of duty, most of the time, they face problem for not having proper toilet facility. Sometimes they have no other option but to go to others' residence for using toilet. Some expressed that because of the lack of

proper toilet facility; at the time of duty they stopped drinking water or any beverage which may be very harmful for their health.

The respondents were also asked whether they face sexual harassment in workplace. Sexual harassment here means unwanted sexually oriented comments, advances or touching. Regarding this, only women personnel responded positively. But, even one response shows that there is the presence of sexual harassment in the police service.

- ***Utility of women police:***

The perception of women police regarding their utility in police service is also important. The responses indicate that most of the women police felt that women have an important role to play in most of the police functions. About 80 per cent feel that they should be allowed to perform all duties like male counterparts while the remaining minority feel the other way. They believe that women police are unable to handle violent situations or hard criminals alone. Therefore, they should be accompanied by male police.

- ***Commitment to Police job:***

To know the extent of their commitment to their job, they were asked- “If you get another government job with equal or more pay than police, will you leave the current job?” Regarding this, about 86.67 per cent of the respondents replied in the negative. The remaining police women expressed that they want to change their job. They felt that it will give them more convenient work schedule and work environment.

- ***Willingness for the police work:***

To know this, they were asked- “How would you rate your readiness for a combat mission?” and it was found that 80 per cent of the respondents rate their willingness to be high while the rest regard it to be medium. This shows that by and large women police enjoy their work in police organisation.

They were also asked- “why do you join this job?” Regarding this, 46.67 per cent of the police women said that they join police service for the sufficient salary and enlistment bonus. 40 per

cent considered that they join it to serve the community while the rest replied that they join it as they have no other options.

- ***Regarding gender role orientation:***

The opinion of respondents regarding gender role orientation is important as it will help to determine the compatibility or in-compatibility of their police role which has always been regarded as exclusively male gender role. To know the opinion on their gender roles, a number of statements were made and respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement.

Regarding the statement “women generally take up jobs due to compelling circumstances and not with their choice”, 33.33 per cent women agree with this while the rest disagree. Second opinion is “women have limited opportunities for career advancement in our society”. In this regard, 86.67 per cent agree with this opinion while the others disagree. Regarding the third opinion that is “working women cannot be as good mothers as non-working women”, 60 per cent agree with the agreement. Another opinion was made that “women’s greatest contribution to the society is by performing their traditional roles” and here 86.67 per cent of women personnel disagree with the opinion. Another opinion was that “husband should be better placed in job than his wife” and 60 per cent agree with this. They believe that this will help in maintaining marital harmony.

These responses show that there is a strong awareness regarding equality of men and women in any occupation. The study shows that police women suffer irrespective of the fact whether they are having traditional orientation or modern values. The respondents with traditional orientation are over-burdened in their effort to perform the functions of two persons within limited time. They also have the fear of failing to perform family responsibilities. On the other hand, women police with modern values suffer at their work place because they are aware of their lower status in police organisation and therefore feel frustrated if they do not get equal treatment and opportunities like men.

6. Conclusion:

At the conclusion, it can be stated that although police profession is always regarded to be for men, the number of women police is now increasing. They are now challenging the gender stereotypes which are not allowing women to come to this profession. But, their number is very low. Therefore, there is the need to make some organisational changes so that the younger generation becomes attracted to this profession. There is also the need for gender sensitisation of police. Only the opening of All Women Police Station is not enough. There is the need for more such police stations. BJP's vision document talks about having All Women Police Station in each district of Assam. But, till now, it has not become a reality. There is the need for social sensitisation. The attitude of police and people has to change. There is also the need for appropriate budget which will include transport and infrastructure facilities like washroom; proper toilet etc. for the women police officers. It is expected that these changes will bring some improvement for the performance of women police in India in general and Assam in particular.

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