

## GENDER INEQUALITY IN POLICE FORCE OF GUWAHATI CITY, ASSAM, INDIA

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**Abstract:** In today's liberalized and globalized era, the role of women has converted from homemaker to professionals and in many sectors women have become a dominant labour force. But gender inequality is still a defining aspect of police force in most of the countries around world, especially in India, as women are generally regarded as the lenient gender. In spite of progressive legislation by the Govt. of India to reserve 30% police jobs for women, in every state of India for attaining gender equality, women are seldom selected in the police force. Additionally, many women who are in police force encounter a 'brass' ceiling and are unable to rise to supervisory positions despite of their qualifications and dedications. However, women employments in police force are on the rise in recent times.

The proposed paper seeks to study the conditions of women police at their work place. The paper has also try to focus on the kind of vulnerability these women face in their workplace during their day-to-day activities.

**Key Words:** Discrimination, Equality, Women.

**Introduction:** Present era witness a greater involvement of women in occupational jobs due to transformation of various intra-woven social, political, economic, cultural equations. Re-energized professionalism of modern days has also encouraged women to be a professional, nullifying the thick line once drawn to deprive woman from her direct livelihood. Women have ventured not only into women orientated jobs but also into those where male are dominating such as advocacy, mass-communication, scientific research, accounts and auditing, architecture, engineering, management, administration, army and policing.

Since the beginning of the societal process, there is always a need to maintain the etiquette within a society, which necessitated land of laws. With this a very fascinating profession emerged, the law enforcement. Law enforcement basically implies realistic endeavor into maintaining tranquility in a civilization with the help of existing laws and rules therein. Initially it was a bastion of male but slowly women were inducted giving them an extension of their household chaos as their professional job profiles were just alike their domestic works. Changing façade of the society has forced governmental strategists to incorporate more women deliberating significant command in law enforcement services or/ and police service.

Atrocities, violence, harassments on women in public/ private sphere have amplified with increase in populace, immigration, dislocation, calamity etc. necessitating women police personnels to handle these chaotic catastrophes of a society. Policing is also transforming to keep pace with changing societal trends. Policing, whole over the world are endeavoring into community centric approaches and for this they require women police who give policing the humanitarian makeover.

Bharatiya Janata Party, who won simple majority in the election of 2014 to Lok Shobha had manifested to make police stations women friendly with an increase in employment of women in police at different levels and accordingly on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, Central Government had announced 33% reservation for women in the police forces in all Union Territories, including Delhi.

Conversely Indian National Congress, now opposition in Lok Shobha also promised 25% of total police officers in a Police Station shall be women in all ranks and increase women police stations from 500 to 2000 within next five years in their election manifestation. It shows there are pressures from public and present scenario of crime to increase the women police personnel.

Keeping pace with the recent developments in policing worldwide, Assam Government is also trying to rejuvenate Assam Police and had inducted few more women cadre. In the last advertisement (2014-15) for constable rank (Armed branch) there were 10% reservations for female candidates. Reasons are obvious; as Assam is ranked second for crime against women by National Crime Records Bureau and here too native friendly concept, need to be articulated.

In the year 1969, Assam had inducted women in police force with an assistant sub-inspector and four constables, starting the snail approach of recruiting women police. A special platoon of women commandos called 'Veerangana'(women warriors) were trained and deployed in Guwahati- the capital city of Assam on January 26, 2013, after the G.S. Road atrocities on a woman in the year 2012. This incident opens the eyes of executives and administrators and from then onwards women policing had increased feebly as seen in the roads of Guwahati, now-a-days.

The manifestation of women policing can be examined in this context as there is very few women police in India including Assam. Masculinity is the

obsession of police, encouraging male dominance which may endeavor into next century.

**Objectives:** The objective of this research paper is to acquire momentous understandings of women professions engaged in policing within Guwahati City. The paper shall try to depict the actual representation of a Woman Police.

**Methodology:** The basis of this study is on primary and secondary data. Secondary data were sourced from diverse accessible resources such as books, articles, newsprints, web contents, non-classified documented information at Assam police headquarters and primary data were shaped through schedule approach. The schedule was crafted with due diligence incorporating well thought, simple and specific questions, which were answered precisely by targeted sample groups of women police within Guwahati City. Purposive sampling methods were adopted to identify and to interact with targeted sample groups comprising of middle and lower ranks of women police. 30 (thirty) women police were discussed with as respondents to the schedule, 10

(ten) each from All Women Police Station, Guwahati Traffic Police and 'Veerangana' (women warriors) deployed under the command of Guwahati City Reserve Police. Guwahati city has been selected as study area as it is the gateway of Northeast India, deploying highest number of women police personal within Northeast India.

**Findings and Analysis:** Women policing has an elongated history of its own but seldom had a woman police reached the pinnacle of her organisation stature, till date negligible women had been promoted to a decision making level and / or given commanding rank, subjecting them to glass ceiling. The women commandos deployed as 'Veerangana'(women warriors) are all employed as constables. Both for dearth of Women Police with parallel competence 'Veerangana' and Women Traffic Police are headed by male protagonist except All Women Police Station.

The present strength of the women in Assam police can be clearly understood from the data received from the Police Headquarter, Ulubari, Guwahati, Assam.

**Table 1: Male and Female Police in different officer's rank in Assam Police**

Sl. No.	Rank	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength	Male	Female	Percentage of female
1.	Director General of Police	3	3	3	0	0%
2.	Additional Director General of Police	14	14	14	0	0%
3.	Inspector General of Police	14	4	3	1	33%
4.	Deputy Inspector General	15	10	10	0	0%
5.	Superintendent of Police/ Commandant	107	95	88	7	8%
6.	Addl. Superintendent of Police/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Commandant	96	79	72	7	10%
7.	Deputy Superintendent of Police/Asstt. Commandant/ Asstt. Commissioner	408	245	221	24	11%

**Source: Assam Police Head Quarter, Ulubari, Guwahati, Assam, India as on 01.01.2015**

Policing is a state government subject and Government of Assam is claiming huge applause for recruiting more women into its police force but on analyzing the available employment data an opposite scenario emerges showing feeble entry / promotion of women police in various ranks. Table 1 details the number of male and women police in Assam police in different ranks. Analyzing Table 1, one can observe that there are no women in upper rank from DIG onwards. In the top there is one woman as IGP along with three males against fourteen (14) sanction post. As on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2015 the actual strength of women police in ASP and DSP ranks are 7 (10%) and 24(11%) respectively. The table 1 also shows that the proportions of women in the higher rank in Assam police are very meager, which may be attributed to

delayed engagement of women in police force. Very recently women are successfully competing Indian Police Service (IPS) and Assam Police Service (APS), hence there are scarcity of women police among the top ranks in the state of Assam.

From Table 2, we came to know that highest women police are in the constable rank, the lowest entry level of a police force, it is 9.4%. Very recent recruitments have contributed to this increment of percentage, but still it is a meager number. There are provisions within police force to directly recruit Sub Inspectors, a sub-managerial post and increase women sub-inspector from 1.7%. Few women, (3.5%) are engaged in clerical post, the post generally considered for women everywhere. Interestingly one woman have

been recruited and appointed as Driver Constable- which is 0.05%

**Table 2: Male and Female Police in non- gazetted rank in Assam Police (Armed Branch)**

Sl. No.	Rank	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength	Male	Female	Percentage of female
1	Inspector	DNA*	255	251	4	1.6%
2	Sub Inspector		997	980	17	1.7%
3	Assistant Sub Inspector/ Clerk		149	149	0	0%
4	Havildar Clerk		268	259	9	3.5%
5	Havildar (M.)		21	21	0	0%
6	Havildar Duftry)		5	5	0	0%
7	Havildar (GD)/ All Trade		4468	4452	16	0.4%
8	Havildar/ PSO		1288	1288	0	0%
9	Nayak		1004	1004	0	0%
10	Less Nayak		1455	1455	0	0%
11	Constable		21950	20060	1890	9.4%
12	Driver Constable		2206	2205	1	0.05%

Source: Assam Police Head Quarter, Ulubari, Guwahati, Assam, India as on 01.01.2015.

\*Data not available

From the above information, one can draw a conclusion that women are still appointed in lower ranks, and upper positions are given to male counterparts, evidencing gender prejudice within Police. When one sees mostly lower cadre women police, gender base discriminating characters are revealed spontaneously, depriving those women police from been promoted to higher ranks and seldom a woman is appointed to a higher rank within police hierarchy.

At the outset, women were enrolled for clerical job in police but subsequently due to the changing circumstances of the society, women were recruited as constables to perform traffic duties or run an exclusive women police station with few promoted, appointed in commanding positions. With creation of *Veerangana* Group, an all women commando unit, Assam has earned laurels in women empowerment.

Regarding the question to targeted respondents' why they are in police, 80% respondents' said that they have become law enforcers for their own desire to work, rest 20% were encouraged by their family members to join this noble profession. These revelations illustrate women's desire to work upfront in a perilous organisation of law enforcement either through self-motivating or encouraged by beloved family members. They have a belief that job security shall empower them, shall get recognition within their extended family, applauded by their society.

All respondents denied about the existence of special gender specific benefits for them when asked about it. They don't have any aspiration for such benefits as they believe to be equally calibrated as their male counterparts are.

They are few hence always in scanty in need of hours. The respondents reported of not getting duty leave easily, may be for fewer in numbers. Male counterparts enjoy liberal duty leaves through mutual understanding among themselves. Women police are deprived from this mutual arrangement of taking leave.

The required infrastructural support for these women police is in dismay. They even lack a hygienic lavatory in their duty place, forcing them to use those in police station, local residence, hotel, restaurant etc. creating both mental and physical distress in them. Structural designs of Police stations are not at all gender sensitive, so many of them don't have changing room for women in duty. Conclusion can be drawn that with increase in appointments of women for law enforcing duties, satisfactory infrastructural facilities are yet to be developed to sustain the basic requirements of a woman. Regarding separate restrooms, only respondents from traffic police ascertain in positive, others use common facilities available only when necessity arises.

When queried about any specific requirements, 50% (15) respondents don't feel the need of such facilities. They are content with their accessible amenities since during duty hours gender discrimination never prevails showing deployed women police are well prepared to work cohesively with their male counterparts, dejecting gender specific conveniences. After all they have come out to serve their countrymen.

Respondents replied that they are ever ready to work late if circumstances arise to a question about reluctance to work late night. They ascertained that they are into a profession, which demands 24x7

duties and have already sacrificed numerous nights to maintain tranquility within society. Their work profile encourages them to be ever vigilant and serve the community wholeheartedly.

Regarding Sexual Harassment at Workplace, they are very much ignorant about this pathetic state of affairs. They didn't know what are commonly referred to as Sexual Harassment at Workplace before this interaction but after understanding, all the respondents said that they had never ever encountered such situation during their training and placement as law enforcers. They also believe that such things don't occur in their esteem organisation. When asked about uncomfortable moments during their working hours for sexually coloured jokes, comments with sexual indication made on them by their co- colleague, publics, seniors, subordinates, etc., all respondents instantaneously denied such happenings in their entire career till date. As per the respondents, Sexual Harassment Redressal Cell exists only at All Women Police Station and not in other two groups – Women Traffic Police and *Verrangana* group. But they have never approached sexual harassment cell as nothing significant have occurred for complaining. But privately 20% (6) agreed that they should have reported these sorts of incidences to their seniors, but are reluctant to do so fearing reverse repercussion resulting in complainant's transfer to remote, volatile areas. Therefore they presume such complain shall constitute into punishment of the complainant. Some others believe differently. They said it might be the case of gender insensitiveness among the male colleagues, unintentionally doing these sort of things as they are into a culture where male dominance are practiced since long back. But it has an adverse effect on the mistreated woman police. Women police are trained, and / or groomed in an atmosphere and / or obligated to renounce sexual nuisance melt out on them. It implies that women police face sexual harassment but remain unreported. Women police informally acknowledge that not just verbal but they encounter physical sexual harassment every now and then.

67% (20) respondents have indicated gender relevancy, but not in a structural way; some men (all - colleagues, seniors, juniors) treat women poorly, women have to deal this as they are into a masculine characteristic profession with majority of male contemporaries, teaching them to be careful by themselves. It was also commented during interactions that a male police's attitude towards a woman police is very much dependent on her personality and temperament. As such this sort of problems faced by women police are characterised as an individualistic.

On the topic of professional exploitation, discrimination, 47% (14) respondents' refuted existence of such exploitation, discrimination in their organisation but 10% (3) alleged about preferential treatment to their male counterparts. Other 43% (13) respondents ignored this issue completely. All respondents said promotions, increments etc. in their organisation is on seniority basis and have never heard of any favoritism.

Getting a job makes a woman independent, is it so? Respondents said that their profession as law enforcers has earned them dignity within public, making them an influential entity contributing towards the development of the society and a much-admired personality within their extended family. But it seems from respondents' informal admittance, motorist generally overlook and disobey Women Traffic Police on roads compelling them to take assistance from their male counterpart. It is not that these women traffic police are ineffectual but motorist mainly being men are habituated to accept male dominance only.

Society is accepting women police as law enforcers but still few are insulting them on the pretext of being from a corrupt organisation, when they try to resolve hostile situation and ask public to maintain tranquility. This is the response to the image created by the male police among the public since its inception. On other hand some others among the public also think these women police are weak, incapable of handling public ire, so starts humiliating them.

Conversely *Veerangana* Group is respected in their duty perhaps for their commando character that seize attention. These women commandos are rigorously skilled for any eventualities, taught to ignore any discrimination during their duty hours. They had overwhelmingly wrote about a strict 8 hours duty schedule against a question asked about their duty hours, as instructed to do so but admitted informally that they don't have any strict schedule of work time and normally have to work more than 8 hours at a stretch. Due to understaffing, their leaves are rationalized, are not allowed for mutual adjusted leaves among themselves which prevail very much among their male counterparts.

To the question about spending quality time with their beloved family members, all respondents echoed their inability to enjoy such privileges of spending moments with their family for limited leave, holidays. They had happily relinquished this family pleasure for the greater interest of serving their society. Both married and unmarried respondents are pleased with their work profile and their family members also appreciate these job specific constrains in this context.

When they were asked about their household responsibilities, 80% (24) respondents' said that being in police and away from home, made them free from daily domestic chores but other 20% (6), who are into a conjugal life, have to bear both private and professional responsibilities with equal footage. It exposed the prevailing contemporary settings of our society where even married women police are overladen both with professional work load, which she has to attend being in employment outside the confines of her home and the traditional role, which she have acquired by being a wife, a mother and a home manager.

All the respondents are happier as they are able to acquire physically exhaustive jobs of law enforcers at such a young age and making financial contribution to their families. They are enjoying newfangled autonomy, liberty and equality but observed reality is that these young women professionals are totally deprived from all essential minimal sustainable circumstances.

**Conclusion:** Curiosity concerning women profession that too in policing made the way of this research paper on women who had influentially penetrated a male bastion. This research study appreciates these women law enforcers for their endeavor into an arena where mental stability and physical might, is a prerequisite. Women police has its history of its own but indispensable infrastructural supports eroding the prospect of attracting more women talents into policing. Inadequate basic amenities are acting as a deterrent to further more recruitment of women. Robust mechanisms should be incorporated into development of adequate support structures either through transformation of existing arrangements or developing new one on need based priority. As women are prepared to work alongside male counterpart, concern authority should eliminate the prevailing stereotype nomenclature of their organisation and recruit more women through all the entry levels in their organisational hierarchy to attain

the structure boosted by gender equality. Additionally gendered based organisations confine women's prospects for advancement. Though women have been able to acquire jobs where male are having stronghold, studies suggest they can be subjected to masculine nature of work culture and may be marginalized.

This researcher is compelled to understand the delicacy, hostility and differentiation embedded in the professional life of a woman police. In one way they are fewer in numbers to articulate their apprehension within their organisation and on the other hand meager numbers of women are recruited and deployed in higher ranks within police in Assam, so they are unable to acquire decision making positions, voice their concerns endangering their status in police, leaving a question blank about their tangible stature in law enforcement. In other word, being fewer in numbers, they are unable to control all the parameters related to professionalism.

Conclusions can be drawn that though society is changing and are accepting women police, gender favoritism exists in police force, in spite of all the effort and policies to increase women participation and promotion in policing. With limited numbers, women police face tremendous obstacles to attain total equity, that is yet to be achieved even when it is mandated by law. Sufficient works have to be done to undo all the inequalities and create policies to foster greater diversity among women and men in police. This may be started immediately by educating and enlightening present women police force about the existing cultural and structural inequalities, so that they become aware and strive for changes, subsequently educating the next new admittances.

Through this discussion, we have attempted to arrive at the conclusion, that women are required in police force; that their increase in numbers is justified from all angles; and have to become an integral part of the police system to increase gender sensitiveness for themselves and for general public.

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