

Women In Police – Professionalism And Capacity Building

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Introduction

Historically there was a belief that woman has no place in the Police force. There was a common belief that a woman's characteristic could definitely not fit the description of a brave Police Officer.

Deployment of women 'Angarakshaks' and spies is described in Chanakya's 'Arthasastra'. There is mention of lady officers named 'Atharvaniska' in Harems where many Indian Monarchs were murdered. Women were employed for Police job during World War II in many European countries. Women Police played a major role in dealing with child abuse in Britain right from 1920s. Women Police came into existence in modern India in 1930s. Kerala and Maharashtra were first in recruiting Women Police.

Hundred years have elapsed since the first female officers entered in Police force. The fact that the Police force is also represented by women is no longer an exception, but a rule. Still many consider women as the gentle arm of the Law Enforcement.

Bartlette and Rosenblum (1977) conducted a study in which 27 Policemen and 27 Policewomen matched for length of service were compared on 56 performance variables. There were no differences in the number or quality of arrests, efficiency ratings, injuries, disciplinary charges, handling of tension or violence or the attitudes of citizens. The study finally concluded that women are as effective as men in Police work.

Homat and Kennedy (1984) conducted a study on "A content analysis of statements about Policewomen's handling of domestic violence". The results of this study confirm the impression of battered women that Policewomen had a beneficial impact on them because they were more understanding, showed more concern and provided more information.

Horne (1980) in his study on "Women in Law Enforcement" concluded that the Policewomen do not patrol as well as the Policemen. The report said that the women do not project the impact of strength and power to the same degree as the male officers and rated men higher on building searches. However the report found that women were as diligent as men in making arrests, and rated women better at handling citizens with guns, family disturbances and car stops.

Linden (1983) found that the performance of women in the Royal Canadian Mount Police is virtually identical and there is no significant difference in the types of calls handled by men and women. The major areas of difficulty are higher attrition rates for females and the attitudes of male members towards females.

Sherman (1975) in his study on 'Evaluation of Policewomen on patrol in a suburban Police Department' observed that the women performed patrol duties as well as the men. They were equally effective in managing distrustful citizens. There were no critical incidents, where Policewomen were reported as unable to do their job satisfactorily. The citizens felt that the women were more sensitive and responsive to their needs.

Peter et al (1974) conducted a study on Police Women on patrol. The study shows that sex is not a bonafide occupational qualification for doing Police work. Van Wormer (1981) in his article entitled "Are males suited to Police patrol work ? " said that Policemen are more prone to violence and of unbecoming conduct. They overprotect Policewomen and then complain that they were a handicap. Policewomen meet the public better. They are better at dealing with rape victims and handling domestic violence. He further suggested that the shortcomings of male officers could be possibly overcome by special selection and training.

In a paper presented by Balkin (1988) on "Why Policemen don't like Policewomen" it was found that though Policemen and women both were equally effective in handling any incident, the male officers remained convinced in their biased opinion that men were better rated than Policewomen especially in handling violent situations and competency.

In a study on "Various aspects of discrimination in the Police" Anderson et al (1993) pointed out that the deployment patterns of Women Police Officers gravitated towards 'low frequency'. It was found that Policewomen were under-represented in many specialist departments and totally absent in others. As a consequence women officers were limited in the amount and type of experience they were able to gain. This in turn affects their job satisfaction and many inhibit their promotion prospects. Finally they emphasized that fewer women than men achieve promotions, which in turn can reinforce male stereotypes about women's abilities.

A study conducted by Holdaway and Parker (1998) in Northern England deduced that women officers were constrained by societal structures of gendered inequalities. Conflicts between work and parental responsibilities were generally sharper for women officers. In spite of all these adversities women officers stood such factors of discrimination and proved their efficiency in crime work. In other words, they sought to overcome their marginalisation within the work force.

Wexler and Hogan (1983) in their study in "Sources of stress among women Police Officers" in California concluded that women were not more dissatisfied than men with tasks or administrators, nor with the impact of their jobs on family life. But they found that women uniformly saw sexist attitudes of colleagues as significant sources of stress.

Brown (1998) examined discriminatory treatment of female Police Officers in England and Wales. The study deduced that women were still under represented both laterally and horizontally and discriminatory and harassing behaviour occurred frequently. The working environment could not be changed merely by the necessity for equal opportunities and other policy initiatives over the last 20 years. Thus further deconstruction of the Police occupational culture and the obstacles it poses for women in the Police service are warranted.

Lehtinen (1976) summed up the women's situation by observing that they are fighting injustice within the Police Department more than on the streets. "The only trouble with women in policing is men in policing".

Timmins and Hainsworth (1989) found that the over all responses revealed open sex discrimination and sexual harassment particularly by supervisors and commanders, who not only tolerated such practices by others but were frequently perpetrators themselves. The pattern of responses suggested that law enforcement has a long way to go in equal employment opportunity and fair employment practices.

Horne (1980) found that department attitudes generally showed that most chiefs as well as male officers hold unfavourable attitudes, sometimes even distrustful ones, towards Policewomen.

Chakravarthy (1994) in his study " Equal opportunities to Women in Police" deduced on the fact that more women entering the Police force has become responsible for considerable reduction in the use of third degree methods and with better training and

knowledge of the law, women can safeguard themselves from sexual harassment by their superiors. He also elucidated that a strong disciplinary support from the higher ups could eliminate noncooperation from male colleagues.

Natarajan (2001) conducted a study on 'Women Police in a Traditional Society' and he concluded that female Police Officers in traditional societies do not aspire to full integration into mainstream policing but instead may prefer a more restricted and segregated role.

A study by Sutton (1996) on 'Women in Policing' emphasizes the need for outstanding women officers to be encouraged to get involved in education and training roles both at the academy and in the field which would put up role models for female Police to look upto and take up. She also suggested in situations such as domestic violence and dowry death, atleast 25% of the Police force should consist of women Police.

Krishnamurthi (1996) is of the view that even though status of women in the Police, of late has been considered indispensable, still the use of their potentialities is inadequate, sidelined and stagnant

Mahajan (1982) found that womens' role in policing remains ambiguous, due to organizational apathy, opposition from the male incumbents, negative societal reaction, lack of committed Policewomen and lack of opportunities for women to occupy positions of authority in the Police organizations.

This author's study on 'Accessibility of Women to Criminal Justice System' (2004) found that all women victims of crimes felt that they would be more comfortable to narrate the incident of violent to a female Police Officer than to a male Police Officer. All women victims of crimes stressed the need for the presence of Women Officers in the Police Stations to deal with their cases. A recent study undertaken by Dr.Celine Sunny of the

Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kochi for Kerala Police also reiterated the same findings. In 2010, 11% of the women complainants in Kerala approached the Police Stations alone. Ten years back, it was zero. This change has happened due to the presence of Women Police in Police Stations, which was not available, 10 years back, in Kerala.

Madhavan (2002) in her paper 'Women in Police' points out the complex issue of Law Enforcement and Gender in India. She stresses that though constitution of India guarantees gender Justice, giving an equal opportunity for education, occupation to women, women often continue to be victims of discrimination, harassment and crime. A core central issue is the concern for equal opportunity. The system has to ensure a level playing field if women are to have satisfaction and just advancement. Women leaders have to assert their role in ensuring this for others. The need of the hour is to motivate women in Police towards continuous Training and Development, Professionalism, aim for Excellence and stress on team playing.

Most of the above mentioned studies feature the fact that the women Police were much more effective in handling violent situations. They are less likely to use excessive force and deal with victims in a much more empathetic and communicative manner.

What is Professionalism ?

Professionalism involves belonging to a Profession and behaving in a way that is consistent with Professional standards. A Profession is an occupation that requires extensive training and the study and mastery of specialised knowledge. It has a specific code of ethics and holds members accountable.

As far as the Police Professionalism is concerned, the frequently used measures for assessing Professionalism in various studies across the world are,

- Disciplinary actions

- Citizen complaints
- Commendations / Medals
- Volume of arrests / Summons
- Sick / Leave time
- Use of force in incidents
- Police academy test scores
- Supervisory performance evaluations
- Line of duty injuries
- Verbal or written communication skills
- Job knowledge
- Quality of works
- Cooperation
- Decision making ability
- Level of commitment
- Professional attitude

An evaluation of Professionalism is done by measuring ones ability in report writing, organization, comprehension, court room presentation, problem solving, dispute resolution, critical thinking, sound judgement, impartiality and intellectual curiosity. Analysing these skills and attributes will show that men or women, can excel and show hallmarks of Professionalism. If one is good at a particular point, the other

may be good at a different point, if equal opportunities are given to equal competitors. True Professionalism can be achieved in Police with the following attributes.

1. High standards of recruitment and selection
2. Formal education qualification
3. Continuous training, development and equal opportunities
4. Formal policies for operations and functions
5. Commitment to service

Jim Ball (2008) states " Professionalism is about having a lifetime dedication and commitment to higher standards and ideals, honorable values and continuous self improvement. Professionalism is built in guidance system for always doing the right thing and always standing tall for what you believe ". It is not only what the Police do but how they do it.

The Police are expected to objectively and impartially prevent crime, gather evidence, solve crimes, make arrests, protect the vulnerable, all in adherence to due process standards as set forth in the Law of the land and Constitution. " Every society gets the kind of criminal it deserves". What is equally true is that every community gets the kind of law enforcement it insists on (Wadman & Allison 2003, iv) Police Professionalism requires a refocusing on the communities the Police serve. Any measure of Police effectiveness today includes citizen satisfaction. A Professional policing reflects upon the original Police mission: partnerships, proactive problem solving, community support and cooperation. Society is diverse with different castes, races, women, children, the aged and the handicapped. In the above social mileue, how can Police Professionalism be achieved if Police force is basically male and focus of all core policing tasks are depended solely on male Police personnel ?

Equal opportunities to all those who are selected and recruited and equal treatment to all citizens according to rules, regulations and ethics rather than on the personal perceptions are very important for a true Profession. For Police to be a true Profession, men or women, they should get equal opportunities and their orientation and attitude towards all sections of the society should be thoroughly Professional and beyond all types of discriminations.

How can such Professionalism be achieved in Police service ? Definitely by sticking on to strict standards of recruitment giving representation to men and women equally at all levels and ensuring equal training and development opportunities to one and all.

As Police are responsible for the maintenance of public order and protection of people, they have to prevent and respond to the different forms of crime and insecurity faced by men, women, girls and boys.

Representative Police Service:-

Creating a Police service that is representative of the population it serves increases the credibility, trust and legitimacy of the service in the eyes of the public. A representative Police service increases operational effectiveness, through access to a broad range of skills, experiences, education and culture. Women bring specific skills and strength to Police work, such as ability to defuse potentially violent situations, minimise use of force and employ good communication skills and widen the net of intelligence gathering. Globally men are currently over represented in the Police service. Specific initiatives are therefore needed to increase the recruitment, retention and advancement of Women in Police.

Statistics of Women in Police

State/Country	No. of Women in Police	Percentage of Women in Police
Maharashtra	24,218	14.32%
Tamil Nadu	11,956	14.61%
Kerala	2739	6.98%
Mizoram	0	0
Assam	186	0.65%
India	83,829	6.54%
U.K		26%
Sweden		25%

Compliance with Obligations under International laws and instruments

Taking the initiative to integrate gender into Police reforms is not only a matter of operational effectiveness but it is necessary to comply with international and regional laws, instruments and norms concerning security and gender. Key instruments include

- ❖ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979)
- ❖ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

Gender Sensitive Policies, Protocols And Procedures

It is necessary to establish gender responsive codes of conduct and policies on discrimination, sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by Police Officers and internal and external reporting mechanisms that can receive complaints. It is required to vet Police recruits for histories of GBV structures to award gender-responsive policing along with respect for human rights. Integrating gender training into basic training given to all Police personnel is also important. Offering in depth skill building training on specific gender topics such as interviewing victims of human trafficking and protocols for responding to domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault is also essential. Financial support can influence the reform process.

Ensuring equal access to men, women and children in rural and urban settings should be the policy of all Police services. This can be assured only through empowered Women Police and gender sensitised Police personnel.

Women in Police and Professionalism

Any Organization aiming to become professional basically has to try assimilate certain values like,

- Integrity
- Team work
- Accountability
- Creativity
- Commitment to continuous learning
- Leadership

- Building trust
- Empowering other

Women are now an integral part of any Police Organization. Hence professionalism and capacity building of women in Police becomes a matter of extreme importance. Enhancement of skills, nurturing best practices and demystifying problems faced by women in Police are basic to enhancing professionalism. This is extremely crucial to build up a Criminal Justice System where everybody especially the vulnerable groups have easy access and totality and objectivity of development of mankind is stressed and dubious role of authority is avoided.

Looking on the victim point of view, if Women Police are not a critical mass and if women victims do not get opportunities for being heard the way they would like to, it would be a great injustice. On the point of view of professionalism in Police, in a democratic society, we have to move towards democratic Policing techniques, rather than the traditional authoritarian model. Naturally we expect equal share for women also in a democratic Police Organisation.

How is it possible to make Police Organisations more democratic ? By opening up the Organisation effectively for women too and at the same keeping up professionalism by ensuring capacity building of Women Police Personnel. The main steps can be summed up as follows:

- (a) Opening up all Police Organisations to women too so that women should become a critical mass in the Organisation, without diluting professionalism.
- (b) Discourage all attempts to develop an air that women Police are privileged over their male counterparts.

- (c) Develop concern over all forms of discriminations and violation of human rights.
- (d) Recognize and eliminate the major impediments like gender stereotyping and conservative paternalistic attitude.
- (e) Discourage impaired performance and assignment of special privileges through organisational framework or nepotism.
- (f) Underline the need to create conducive atmosphere at workplace for achieving professional qualitative work output at regional, national and international level.
- (g) Encourage continuous professional development programmes for women at all levels in all professional subjects.
- (h) Facilitate equitable representation of men and women within every level of the Police Organisation.
- (i) Establish strong professional network among women in Police at national and international level.
- (j) Emphasizing the importance of merit at all levels.
- (k) Developing mechanisms for flexi timing for women in need for time with families, for limited time periods.

What should be the common objective of all women in Police in making a Professional Police Service ? All women in Police should have in common a strong commitment to their profession and the desire to ensure a safe and secure environment for their communities.

Worldwide, many studies have been conducted to explore into career related issues of women in Police. In most of the studies, the results showed the following as the major challenges.

- ❖ A perceived lack of equal access to positions

- ❖ Career development
- ❖ Inadequate mentoring systems

It is a fact that political and senior management support for improving the position of women in Police are not sufficient. Advocacy through networks, conferences etc is necessary in this regard. Developing practical guidelines to help Police services improve equality between men and women in Police services is another major challenge. The women Police networks should be able to offer a 21st century state-of-the-art public service to its citizens through well trained, well motivated and effectively employed officers. A girl walking through the street or sitting at home should feel confident that she will get best of services from a Police Woman patrolling in the street or a Commissioner of Police sitting in her office.

Increasing tasks of Women Police

Handling of women victims of crimes numbering very high in domestic violence, cyber crimes, harassment at public spaces etc are major tasks where Women Police is essential. Handling women criminals is another area where Women Police presence is an absolute necessity. Gender biased violence, human trafficking, sexual assault and child abuse are the greatest threats to the human society world wide. But in the present day world, the Police tasks have become extremely diversified that the presence of men and women officers are equally required.

Many statutory bodies like the National Commission for Women recommend Women Police patrolling and Special Women Police Pickets at many places for ensuring safety and security of women.

After the shocking incident of molesting a girl at public place in Assam, NCW recently recommended steps which include patrolling by Women Police in the entire state and setting up special pickets at all the 128 pubs in the state. How is it possible for any Police Organisation to meet such needs until and unless they have enough of women in Police ?

A recent report says that the Special Action Force, an elite unit of the Philippine National Police has decided to include female SAF Commandos in combat operations and it has all female Commando Unit to cope with situations in the field. In dealing with terrorist activities or similar situations may also require trained women officers. SAF Police Director Catalino Cuy said that in military exercises and war games, the all female Commandos matched the skills of their male colleagues by topping exercises in gun handling, endurance run, land navigation and physical fitness tests.

Multitasking has become an absolute necessity in Police profession. The fact that women can no longer play a secondary role to men in Police has to be understood by the Police administrators and policy makers. A policy of avoiding Women in Police is no longer acceptable or feasible. At the same time, problems associated with Police work are compound for women by role conflicts and negative attitudes. Police administrators must become conscious of the special problems facing women on the job, develop policies against sexual discrimination and become sensitive to the need of Women Police Officers. Gender sensitisation programmes for all men in Police has to be ensured so as to ensure a dignified working environment for Women in Police as well as for proper service delivery to the women public.

Working condition in the Police Station has to be improved by providing separate rest rooms for Women Police. A fair policy regarding the duties to be assigned to pregnant women has to be drawn. Maternity leave may not be considered as a handicap for women in Police profession. Such necessities are to be considered on a

broader social perspective. Family members of Women Police also need to be sensitised on the issue of professional necessities of a Police Officer. Facilities like crèches may be provided by the organization itself, where ever women are posted in large numbers.

Incentives to the Police Organisations conforming to gender friendly values by linkage of grants-in-aid to percentage of Women Police, and gender friendly work atmosphere would make a long way in making the State Police Organisations more gender friendly and professional in attitude towards women employees and in building facilities for a woman friendly atmosphere.

Capacity Building in Women Police

Professional capacity and dedication of each and every officer is extremely important for a Police Organisation as well as the society it serves.

In Many Police Services, Women Police were only a closed wing with few members. This caused major impedements in their practical exposure to various and diversified Police functions. Slowly the trend is changing. However a total integration of men and women is yet to be achieved in most of the Police Services. For Women Officers special capacity building training and development programmes is a necessity; considering their limited exposure to core Police functions. Encouraging women to take up all professional assignments also is a way of development. Regular special trainings in investigation skills, CID skills, cyber skills etc also would be very useful. Physical capacity building programmes and skills in handling weapons is also important.

This author had opportunity to see how many Women Police Officers from the Carrebian, African and other regions take personal interest and spend money from

their pockets or get themselves sponsored to attend the International training programmes organised by the International Association of Women Police. Such International exposure and opportunity to get trained in weapons/tactics, UN Peace keeping opportunities, and various professional subjects would widen the horizon of Women Police.

Janamaithri - A Kerala Model on Capacity Building

In 2008, Government of Kerala launched a Community Policing Project, viz, the Janamaithri Suraksha Project. As far as possible, Women Constables were posted as Assistant Beat Officers in Janamaithri Police Stations. These Officers during their beat duty got opportunities to interact very closely with community members and solve their problems.

This author had occasion to notice during an Inspection of a Police Station that a criminal gangue of youngsters involved in several house breaking and theft cases could be arrested by the Police, based on an information given by a housewife to the Woman Beat Officer while she visited her house. There were many instances in which information on criminal activities were passed on by women and children to visiting Women Beat Officers. Incidents of domestic violence and sexual harassment at public places were automatically diminished where Women Beat Officers patrolled/visited.

Over a period of time, this author had noticed tremendous capacity building in the Beat Officers. Their communication skills, intelligence skills, crime solving capacity, dispute solving ability etc were increased leaps and bounds. During a visit of the State Police Chief to a Janamaithri Police Station, he asked the Policemen about the problems they faced. The Women Beat Officers suddenly started narrating the problems faced by community members which they have noticed while they were on

beat duty. A more beautiful example of professional capacity building would be very rare to be found.

During the Global Conclave on Community Policing held in Kochi (2010) the International and national delegates were surprised to watch the communication skill and professional skills of a Woman Beat Officer from Ottapalam Janamaithri Police Station. She presented how the safety and security of the community they served increased due to the efforts of Community Policing.

It is very obvious from the Janamaithri example that the panacea to professional problems of Women in Police is getting more and more opportunities to work in diversified fields and getting exposure to all professional arenas. Over protection and limiting the services to certain fields only could be detrimental in capacity building. It will also deprive the society of such useful services of Women Police.

There are also certain other examples from Kerala which could be showcased. The 24 x 7 Women Helpline is manned by Women Police. The very fact that women in distress can call 24 hours to this Helpline gives a sense of security to women. The Officers working in the Women Helpline get exposed to various problems faced by women at public places, educational institutions, work places and homes. Some of them who gain from their experiences do many proactive things to prevent violence against women.

Suggestions

- ❖ Open up Police Services (laterally and horizontally) to both men and women equally.
- ❖ Integrate men and women fully, where ever it is not yet done.

- ❖ Arrange continuous training and development programmes for Women Police including regional, national and international programmes aimed at capacity building.
- ❖ Arrange networking of women in Police and Annual Conferences with a view to foster professionalism and capacity building.
- ❖ Ensure diversified experience to Women Police Officers with exposure to all fields.
- ❖ Any Police task with public interface should have a women component of atleast 25%.
- ❖ Ensure good working environment without any room for discrimination and harassment
- ❖ Establish mentoring system to deal with professional and personal problems.
- ❖ Financial support to Police organizations speeding up recruitment and advancement of women at all levels.

Conclusion

For professionalism and capacity building of any Police Organisation, equal opportunities to both men and women in the services is a must. Horizontal and lateral representation of women as a critical mass in the Police Organisation is also a must for professionalism in the Police Department as well as for equal accessibility of Criminal Justice System to all sections of the society. Equal opportunities for women in Police to handle diversified fields is extremely important in capacity building. Over protection, marginalisation and limited opening for women is detrimental to the professional growth of individuals and organisations. This is detrimental for the society the organisation serves too.

National and Regional Conferences of Women in Police should impress upon Police services to aim at fostering public recognition and understanding of importance of woman's role in law enforcement. Financial support to those Police Services recruiting Women to Police at all levels and giving them continuous training to serve the society better is a must. We may think of a National Centre for Women and Policing (NCWP) to promote increasing the number of women at all ranks as a strategy to improve Policing responses to community, to reduce brutality and strengthen Community Policing Projects. It's main objective should be to educate policy makers, the media and the public about the impact of increasing the representation of women in policing.