

Conclusion

The present research on women police in the state of West Bengal (which includes women police deployed in the Kolkata Police as well as in the districts of North and South 24 Parganas) reveals that women police have efficiently performed their specialized task of dealing with women and children. In general, women who report their victimization to the police have often been subjected to sexual exploitation and their plight has often been neglected and ignored. When a woman is beaten up or tortured for dowry or threatened or abducted or raped, she is not only physically injured but also psychologically hurt.¹ The gap is even wider in the case of sexual offences mainly due to social pressure on rape victims to remain silent or blaming the victim for precipitating / provoking the incident in some way. Prevalence of such attitudes are barriers which prevent women from reporting cases to the police. There is also reluctance on the part of the victim to report because of the insensitive environment in the police station. In such instances, women police are required to protect, care for and provide necessary guidance including legal counselling to women who have been victims of violence. In different states of India, All Woman Police Stations (AWPSs)² staffed by women police personnel have been specially created to help women victims of violence receive justice. Despite some allegations of corruption and complaints of insensitivity, the work undertaken by women officers in the AWPS in helping women victims have been appreciated by the people and the image of women police has improved. Seeing their phenomenal success in other states such as Tamil Nadu, the present Government of West Bengal in a bid to curb the rise in crime against women has announced the establishment of sixty-five AWPSs.³

¹Ishrat Shamim, Towards Pro-Women and Child Friendly Policing in Bangladesh: Our Experiences, Centre for Women and Children Studies, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2001, p. 1.

² Only in Tamil Nadu AWPSs are known as All Women Police Units (AWPU).

³'State to have 65 all-woman PS', *The Times of India*, Kolkata, 30 June 2011.

By utilizing their skills of empathy, patience, perseverance, affection and warmth, women police have solved a number of domestic as well as marital problems. It is believed that there exists some sort of natural empathy between women police officers and rape victims that can provide better communication.⁴ It is generally found that women confide to women officers more easily than male officers. In many incidents women police officers deployed in the Women's Grievance Cell (WGC) of the Kolkata Police and Protection of Women and Children Cell (POWC) in the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) of the West Bengal Police have been successful in investigation and gathering of evidence from women who have been victims of violence. Some women police inspectors have been successfully involved in processing the case in the courts. The Kolkata Police's, WGC, headed by Rina Sarkar, well assisted by Gouri Mukherjee, a distinguished investigator, has secured convictions in several cases of torture of married women by their husbands and in-laws and rape and kidnapping of girls.⁵ Another sphere where women police have benefited the police department is in solving cases related to child abuse, including sexual abuse. It appears that policewomen simply do a better job in the investigation and solution of domestic violence, rape and child abuse incidents and related problems.⁶ The 'difference' in the nature of response while dealing with incidents such as domestic violence, sexual assault, etc. is the positive contribution of women police personnel to the law-enforcement profession. No longer are women police personnel labelled as social workers dealing with deviant women and children. But in contemporary times specialized units such as the WGC, POWC, AWPS, have provided an opportunity to women police personnel to learn and upgrade their policing skills through specialized training. In-service courses on issues related to investigation of crime against women are being held at the Swami Vivekananda State Police Academy, Barrackpore, and the Central Detective Training School, Kolkata. The Gender Training Institute in Delhi and Uttaranchal has prepared specialized training modules for such issues. NGOs working in areas such as prevention of trafficking of women and children

⁴Sandra K. Wells and Betty L. Alt, *Police Women: Life with the Badge*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 2005, p. 1.

⁵Tarun Mitra, 'Policewomen Steadily Stepping Out of Shadow to Hog Limelight', *The Kolkata Protector*, 1, 6, January-February 2011, p. 43.

⁶Wells and Alt., *Police Women*, p. 1.

are also involved in training police personnel. Thus women police personnel are professionals who have been assigned the specialized task of dealing with women and children. The segregation which gets manifested in the 'gendered model of policing' has benefited women victims as well as women police personnel. The 'gendered model of policing' has provided an opportunity to women police personnel to confidently perform all policing-related tasks in an environment free from any sort of harassment from their male colleagues.

Women Indian Police Service (IPS) officers by virtue of their senior rank and socio-economic status have access to far better opportunities than women police personnel of the subordinate ranks. They have to deal with general issues such as political interference in the operation or functioning of the police or in matters of posting. For example, in spite of professionally probing into the rape of an Anglo-Indian woman near Park Street, Damayanti Sen had to face the wrath of political leaders. The political leaders had commented that this particular incident was concocted and a conspiracy against the present government. Unusually, Sen along with the joint commissioner of police (Jt. C.P.) headquarters addressed the media clarifying that the Detective Department, Kolkata Police (KP), had cracked the case and it was not any individual effort. Within a month of probing this incident, Sen was transferred from the Detective Department and received an insignificant posting as D.I.G. (Training). Though officially it has been declared as a 'routine' transfer, a section of society feels that such a posting is the result of offending the political bosses of the state.⁷ Women police officers are often unceremoniously by-passed for promotions just as their male counterpart are. For them, the issues of improvement are general and not gender-specific. Their issues are mostly related to general administration and structural policies. There is a ready acceptance of any male police in the district, in any rank or in any difficult assignment. But during the 1970s / and early 1980s such congenial conditions did not exist for women IPS officers. A few women in the senior-ranks were prevented from being assigned field postings and

⁷'Mamta mum, police parade. Officer chant unity, CP meets CM', *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, 21 February 2012.

taking up challenging assignments. However, in recent times the scenario is changing. For the last three decades women have entered the elite IPS. They have broken the glass ceiling and by their ability have proved themselves successful in attaining some of the top positions in the law-enforcement profession. Senior women IPS officers perform all the hardcore policing duties. They have served as superintendents of police of districts, inspectors general of police of ranges, joint directors of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), etc. In states such as Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal and Andhra Pradesh, women IPS officers have even been appointed as the director general of police. Women IPS officers are involved in all mainstreaming police assignments and thereby follow the 'integrated model of policing'.

Police personnel in the Kolkata Police as well as in the West Bengal Police share some common features. The constabulary, forming the base of the police hierarchy, has not been properly and effectively utilized in police work. The National Police Commission had emphasized that the constabulary should be recruited, trained and deployed for duties involving exercise of discretion and judgment with due regard to the paramount need for securing public co-operation and understanding in any situation.⁸ Yet, even today the constabulary performs a predominantly mechanical role assigned to them by the 1902 Police Commission report. The women constables are no exception to this general trend. They are mostly involved in law-and-order duties or they escort women prisoners to the hospital or court. They perform clerical work and have to follow the dictates of their male seniors. Women sub-inspectors are involved in the investigation of cases related to crime against women. They are not involved or their inputs or feedbacks are hardly considered in framing policies. Some of the women police personnel suffer verbal / sexual harassment but they hesitate to discuss such issues. Women police personnel in subordinate ranks have limited access to in-service training. As compared to women police personnel posted in the districts, women police posted in the Kolkata Police have relatively better access to training opportunities.

⁸Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Report of the National Police Commission, 1977-81.

The subordinate women police personnel from the rank of constable to sub-inspector have grievances which remain unheard and which are more gender-specific. Infrastructural facilities such as proper restrooms and toilets are hardly available for women police personnel in the West Bengal Police. Women police personnel belonging to different social classes confront dissimilar experiences and forms of discrimination. Women in the middle level management within the police structure have faced gender-based discrimination and are often prevented from taking up challenging assignments or postings and are unceremoniously by-passed in matters of important postings. Women police personnel, especially at the lower and middle level management, suffer from absence of recognition and are marginalized within the police organization. Women police personnel especially at the subordinate level suffer 'doubly' by virtue of their rank and gender.

Women police personnel have experienced the patriarchal system, be it in their workplace or in their homes. Some continue to fight the strongly patriarchal structure of the family with its abusive and oppressive husbands. A police job entails long hours of work with little choice concerning the time of the day that the work must be done. But women are far more likely than men to be primary child care providers. In addition, women, in general, undertake by far the greater proportion of household labour.⁹ The police job is designed with the expectation that the person who fills them would be free of extensive childcare responsibilities. Women police often confront extreme difficulties while trying to balance their personal and professional spheres. Lack of family support in caregiving tasks accompanied with lack of secondary caregiving institutional infrastructure such as adequate crèches and daycare centres makes it even more difficult for women to work in a demanding profession such as policing. In this context, formal equality of opportunity exists, i.e. positions in society are legally open to all, but such a formal equality of opportunity is not accompanied by equality of fair opportunity.

⁹Jennifer Saul, *Feminism. Issues & Arguments*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 8.

Equality of fair opportunities requires availability of social and material infrastructure so that all have 'a fair chance to attain them'.¹⁰

In general, women police personnel at the lower- and middle-level management encounter an organization which is far from gender-neutral. The options and opportunities for the advancement of women police is constrained by a gendered work culture, unsupportive, unappreciative male colleagues, gender stereotypes, gendered organizational policies, sexual harassment at the work place, unavailability of appropriate infrastructural facilities at the workplace, and discrimination in the assignment of work and postings. For this section of women police personnel, differential treatment in form of additional rights and privileges is required to help them reach a state of effective equality. In order for women police to be treated at par with men, some women may have to be treated differently from others. Career-friendly policies may be adopted to help women advance and attain equality with their male counterparts. They may require liberal parental leave policies and inexpensive childcare facilities in the form of crèches and daycare centres. Pregnant trainees may be sent home and their training may recommence after one year of delivery. However this should not affect their seniority. Flexible working conditions, part-time work, including job-sharing and flexitime may be considered for women police personnel at the middle-management level.¹¹ These rights and privileges will create a more level playing field for the women police, so that women police personnel at this level can pursue the same career path as men. It will allow more women police personnel in the middle and lower managerial level to build their careers, enabling them to rise to positions of greater prominence and responsibility in future.

In the Indian context, it is too early to conclude that women police have bought a different perspective to police work. Women who have reached the top may adopt innovative work styles but the organizational ethos remains masculine at heart. Women

¹⁰John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1971, p. 73.

¹¹Recommendations of the Fourth National Conference for Women in Police, jointly organized by the Orissa Police and BPR&D, New Delhi, 15-17 September 2010.

police personnel, especially in the subordinate ranks, are increasingly using their physical strength to control difficult situations or controlling crowds during a political event or socio-religious festivals. In fact, during such difficult policing assignments ‘masculinization’ of women police (at the subordinate level) is taking place. At the subordinate level, their performance till date remains narrow and restricted. They have definitely moved from the point of ‘entry’, but their influence and impact at large is not felt at the decision-making level or at the middle management level. Even though some senior women IPS officers are doing very well in their respective area of work, their work has not been publicized or documented. People in general are not aware of their good work. It can be argued that they have developed their strategies and skills and performed efficiently. Women have established their own activities against all odds and sustained them. They have been effective and efficient. Women police personnel at the middle-management level have utilized their verbal and communication skills rather than physical force to control difficult law-and-order situations thereby positively contributing to the police department. Complaints of human rights violations or possible law suits from citizens are less in areas where women police are deployed. However, women police personnel as contributory positive players have not been fully recognized within the police organization and by society, at large. The irony is that they are ‘not entirely’ within the police organization. In the higher echelons of the police hierarchy, there has been a few token representations. Those who emulate the male model are allowed to penetrate the restricted boundaries, while the majority of women police personnel are left on the periphery.

To bring change, the organizational culture of the police has to change. A restructuring of the internal structure of the police organization, existing police ranks, officer’s attitudes, power relations within the police organization and the relationship across police ranks is necessary. But such changes do not seem to have occurred in the contemporary Indian scenario. In fact, the 26/11 Mumbai Terror attacks¹² and left-wing and right-wing

¹²In 2008 there was shooting and bombing across Mumbai, India’s financial capital, by Islamic terrorists who came from Pakistan.

extremism has necessitated an increase of 'combat' activity within certain units of the police. The civil police is too being trained to confront urban terrorism and guerilla warfare. The hierarchical, masculine and aggressive image of the police remains. From its inception, the institution of police based on the Irish model was designed to subjugate and control the subjects under British colonial power. It is an irony that in spite of six decades of independence, the Police Act of 1861 has been retained and followed. Time and again, efforts have been made to reform the police system in India, but unfortunately the reforms have never been implemented. There has been no fundamental shift in the police organization from the bureaucratic to the new flat-shaped Japanese managerial model. There have only been a few sideways / horizontal moves and the original conception of crime-fighting remains intact. The transformation has been one of externals where a few feminine qualities have been recognized, appreciated and absorbed, but not totally internalized within police organization and work. The structure and culture of the police organization needs a massive reform / alteration before gender mainstreaming can fully take effect. However, it is difficult to predict the time when such changes will be effective.

It is suggested that policymakers plan and execute new policies at both the organizational level as well as at the government level to reduce the constraints women police personnel especially at the subordinate level confront. The visibility of women in the police organization has to be improved. It is necessary to increase the representation of women officers in all ranks especially at the supervisory level. It is necessary also to involve the lower-level officers in decision-making, thus expanding their work spheres. The distribution of women throughout the range of police activities continues to be uneven. Such distribution of assignments has to be improved. However, keeping in mind the Indian scenario 'career breaks' seems unlikely to happen in the near future, especially at the lower level. However, in recent times women police in the senior ranks, at the middle-or senior-management levels, are opting for career enhancement and improvements. They are taking study leave or accepting U.N. assignments at Kosovo and Cyprus to get exposure and experience in international law-enforcement. In-service /

refresher training should be made more family-friendly. It should focus on open learning, involving limited attendance away from their residence and families.¹³ Conferencing arrangements and distant learning strategies should be adopted. Women should have equal access to all the specialist spheres of police activity.

Although women police are still far from achieving parity with men, the number of women in the police at all ranks has increased incrementally over the past few decades. This general trend of increase in the number of women in police is likely to continue in the twenty-first century. Hopefully, in the near future, the visibility of women police will increase as more and more women will come forward to join the police organization. It can be concluded that in West Bengal the time to completely integrate women police (at the lower-and middle-management level) within the police organization has still not been reached. In West Bengal, a 'gendered model of policing' is being followed by women police personnel ranging from the rank of constable to inspector. But this 'gendered model of policing' is a 'separate but equal model' of policing and is an interim stage before full mainstreaming of women in police takes place.¹⁴ Gender equality in police does not imply that women police personnel should emulate male police personnel and perform the same work as men. Gender equality in police implies that women police personnel should be allotted and assigned such duties where optimum utilization of their skills and potentialities take place. In West Bengal a 'gendered model of policing' for the women police in the middle and lower levels of the police hierarchy is being simultaneously followed with the 'integrated model of policing' (for the senior women police officers). This reflects the distinct concern of different classes of women (as well as the rank they occupy in the police hierarchy) and does not imply a conflict in the process of mainstreaming of women in police. Instead, pursuing both models of policing may have the result in the long run of improving the situation of women police personnel. Hopefully, in the near future more and more women will come forward to join the police

¹³Recommendations of the First National Conference on Women in Police, jointly organized by the BPR&D, MHA, Government of India and Delhi Police.

¹⁴Mangai Natarajan, *Women Police in Changing Society. Back Door to Equality*, Ashgate Publishing Company, England, p. 5.

organization. Women police officers will perform the dual responsibility as a police officer to enforce the law and order in the society, provide peace and security to society, in general, and as emancipated women to empower other women and society in general.¹⁵

¹⁵This idea has been influenced and derived from Natarajan, *Women Police in a Changing Society*, p. 173.