

# **In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces**

**Deepanjali Bakshi**

## **In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces**

Copyright©

WISCOMP

Foundation for Universal Responsibility

Of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi, India, 2006.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

*Published by*

WISCOMP

Foundation for Universal Responsibility

Of His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Core 4A, UGF, India Habitat Centre

Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003, India

**This initiative was made possible  
by a grant from the Ford Foundation.**

*The views expressed are those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect those of WISCOMP or the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama, nor are they endorsed by them.*

# Contents

Preface .....	5
Acknowledgements .....	8
In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces – A Background .....	9
Men, Women and the Armed Forces .....	21
Changing Perspectives on Women in Armed Forces.....	29
Selection and Training – An Overview .....	41
From Margin to Mainstream – Barriers to the Integration of Women Officers .....	64
Combat Exclusion and Women in the Indian Armed Forces .....	82
The Flip Side Story – Military Women and the Stress Factor .....	101
Monitoring Mechanisms – An Overview .....	119
End Notes .....	129



# Preface

The Scholar of Peace Fellowships awarded by WISCOMP for academic research, media projects and special projects are designed to encourage original and innovative work by academics, policy makers, defense and foreign office practitioners, NGO workers and others. The series WISCOMP Perspectives brings the work of some of these scholars to a wider readership. The monograph *In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces*, the outcome of an academic project undertaken by Deepanjali Bakshi, is the twenty second in the series of WISCOMP Perspectives.

While this research pertains specifically to the question of the induction of women in the Indian Armed Forces, it cannot be isolated from the larger dimensions of feminist debates on women and war. This is a debate that is both complex and riddled with contradictions. The contradictions reflect the complexities of the different strands of feminism – liberal feminist strands that look at women’s professional advancement and equal opportunity as defining the terms of discourse and the radical feminist strands that look beyond this to examine in great detail the intricate linkages between militarism and patriarchy.

The liberal feminist argument contends that getting more women into the military is an argument for equality of opportunity and equal representation of women across professions. This strand of thought believes that the links between masculinity and militarism will be interrogated with the induction of women into armed forces, forcing armies to rethink at least some of their patriarchal values and practices. In recent years, the US occupation of Iraq is a stark reminder of a new visible footage of war- one in which women are playing an ever expanding role closer to the front lines, adding to the debate surrounding the rationale for their induction into the armed forces and the roles they are now being called upon to play within these structures.

There is however an increasingly powerful set of radical feminist discourses as exemplified by the work of feminists like Cynthia Enloe for instance, who locate their argument on a different track. Enloe points out that in their quest for equality, which entails demands for their inclusion in the armed forces, women actually ended up internalizing

military values and beliefs that in the long run do not serve their interests. On the contrary, it undermines their physical security as well as their political influence.

This monograph is located squarely within the parameters of the first strand of liberal feminist thought. It is clearly informed by notions of professional advancement and equality of opportunity between the sexes. As Deepanjali Bakshi points out, the spirit of this project is to uphold gender equality. Women should neither be given an unfair advantage nor disadvantage in the Armed Forces because “bullets don’t differentiate.”

A special feature of this study is that it is drawn at least partially from the author’s first hand experience as a member of the Indian Armed Forces. Inducted into the Indian Army in 1995, as a short service commissioned officer, the work was initiated while the author was still a serving officer in 2001. 2001-2002 in fact marked a decade since the Indian Armed Forces opened its portals to women, partially, the author argues, in response to the shortage of officers in the ranks, and partially because it was considered progressive and politically correct. This study consequently marks a watershed in time – the completion of ten years of what was described as a “social experiment” is probably as good a time to take stock of the initial assumptions, perceptions, sentiments and attitudes on the subject of women in the Indian Armed forces and also provide a context to put forward certain recommendations on this rather contentious issue. The fact that a woman officer who has served as Staff Officer, Company Commander, Instructor and Staff Officer, has undertaken this exercise greatly enhances the value of this work.

The study has sought to examine how organizational aims of the armed forces and personal advancement goals for women pursuing a career in the profession can be balanced. In the process it examines popular gender stereotyping and its impact on the performance and morale of women recruits, and the problems faced by women officers from the stage of recruitment to training to deployment. The study turns the scanner on the combat exclusion policy for a woman that is followed not just by the Indian Armed Forces but many other national Armed Forces as well across the world. The implication and impact of this decision is examined from the point of view of someone who has been a part of the system. Also under scrutiny is the policy of the Indian Armed Forces to restrict the services of women to short service

commissioned officers with a maximum period of fourteen years. The result is that for many women this never becomes a serious career option.

The study has relied on both secondary as well as some primary data – the latter was understandably hard to come by because defense matters are normally shielded from public scrutiny. Despite this the author has managed to interviewed several women and men officers and this primary material has added value to the monograph.

Despite the fact that more than a decade has elapsed since the Indian Armed Forces decided to open its portals to women, there has been no systematic study of this nature that has sought to document the constraints and challenges faced by these officers particularly from the perspective of the women officers themselves. The location of the author in the centrestage of this arena is consequently important in more ways than one. In many ways this study is a pioneering baseline study that will set the stage for further explorations on the subject and also help to bring this subject into the arena of public consciousness and dialogue.

**The WISCOMP Research Team**

# Acknowledgements

This research project was undertaken as a part of the Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace fellowship, under the aegis of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. For the successful completion of this research project the researcher would like to thank the following people for their contribution and encouragement.

First of all I would like to acknowledge and thank the Indian Armed Forces as an organization and how privileged I am to be associated with them. They are the true inspiration behind this project and this piece of work is my humble contribution to them.

At WISCOMP I would like to thank Dr Meenakshi Gopinath and Dr Sumona DasGupta for their valuable guidance at every step. I am really grateful to Dr Sumona for her patience and constant review of the project.

I would like to extend a very special thanks to Dr Swarna Rajagopalan for her valuable insights on the project. They have helped not only to shape this project but every other piece of work I have worked on since. Her notes on my project will remain my constant companions to be referred to again and again.

On a more personal note I would like to thank my late grand uncle Major General Ranbir Bakhshi, MC who was a guiding light for me and without his network of friends and contacts this project would not have been possible. I would also like to remember my Army ‘buddy’ and coursemate M J Jissa who is no more but will remain a constant source of inspiration for me. I would also like to thank my family, especially my husband, my parents, my grandparents, my little boy and my brother and sister for their constant support. Without my friends and their faith in me nothing would have been possible – I salute you all!

**Deepanjali Bakshi**



# **In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces – A Background**

*In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces* is an academic research project, the study for which was conducted over a period of one year from October 2001 to October 2002 on a WISCOMP (Women in Security Conflict Management and Peace) Fellowship. WISCOMP is an initiative of The Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

## **Aim**

Traditionally, the Armed Forces have been the sole preserves of men. Societal changes in the status of women, demographic needs and increasing levels of education and economic prosperity have led to women making inroads into this hitherto male domain. Society at large today has also become progressively more conscious and politically correct. It therefore expects a wider representation of all cross sections of society, increased roles for women and greater protection of individual rights.

In the Indian Armed Forces, the induction of women is a fairly recent phenomenon with barely a decade of reckoning. In keeping with the Services' requirements and the small participation envisaged for women in the Indian Armed Forces, their induction has been a measured and slow enterprise. Women are commissioned only as officers in supporting arms and services as India has a formal combat exclusion policy for women. Moreover, they are offered only a Short Service Commission, which is an initial compulsory contractual tenure, extendable to a maximum term of 14 years. Nearly a decade after the induction of women in the Indian Armed Forces, little has changed for them in terms of career opportunities and exposure available. Their integration and acceptance in the Services remains a contentious issue. Since men are traditionally the dominating partners in the Armed Forces with the added advantage of their existing position of authority, they have certain preconceived notions and assumptions about the capabilities of women and have therefore ascribed a very limited role to them. For the women who join the Services however, it is a serious career option and they have the same aspirations and career goals as men. Therefore they feel

they have a right to the same equitable terms of service and career opportunities as the men.

A professional Army has to optimally utilize its material and human resources for effective operational preparedness. To maintain its leading edge it has to rely on the synergistic skills, talents and motivation of its soldiers – both men and women. This research project seeks to address how the Indian Armed Forces can optimise the employability of its women officers as trained professionals and integrate them as effective members of the team without compromising organizational goals or individual careers. The two basic considerations here involve the fundamental issues of national security and individual aspirations. For women to have a more significant role in the Armed Forces brings up a plethora of issues ranging from the impact of such a step on defence readiness, to the practical considerations of having women in the Forces given the Indian social and cultural context. In the light of the above, the paper discusses the impact of socialization on the decision since any military service is a reflection of its civilian society. Further it delves into the historical perspective of the issue with reference to the changes wrought in other nations. Keeping in mind the Indian context it highlights aspects of induction, training, and barriers to role employability of women officers, combat exclusions, the stress factors confronting military women and the need to monitor and study the subject further.

Prior to further discussions on the subject, to place the issue in its context and to familiarise the reader, a background section on the structure of the Indian Armed Forces is elucidated below.

## **Background Information – Indian Armed Forces**

The supreme command of the Indian Armed Forces is vested in the President of India. The responsibility of national defence however rests with the cabinet. The Defence Minister is responsible to Parliament for all matters concerning the Defence Services. The administrative and operational control of the Armed Forces is exercised by the Ministry of Defence and the three Service headquarters. The Indian Armed Forces comprise of the three Services – the Army, Navy and Air Force. Their respective Chiefs of Staff that is, the Chief of Army, the Chief of Naval staff and the Chief of Air Staff, head each Service. For greater synergy amongst the three Services an integrated defence headquarter has been instituted under a Chief of Integrated Defence Staff since 2001 and a

first tri-service unified command has come up in Andaman and Nicobar.

The rank structure of Commissioned ranks in the three Services is as under:

<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Air Force</b>
Field Marshal	Admiral of the Fleet	Marshal of the Air Force
General	Admiral	Air Chief Marshal
Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Air Marshal
Major General	Rear Admiral	Air Vice Marshal
Brigadier	Commodore	Air Commodore
Colonel	Captain	Group Captain
Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Wing Commander
Major	Lieutenant Commander	Squadron Leader
Captain	Lieutenant	Flight Lieutenant
Lieutenant	Sub Lieutenant	Flying Officer

## **Indian Army**

The Indian Army is led by the Chief of Army Staff, with Army Headquarters at New Delhi. He is assisted by the Vice Chief of Army Staff and seven other principal staff officers namely two Deputy Chiefs of Army Staff, an Adjutant General, a Quarter Master General, a Master General of Ordnance, a Military Secretary and an Engineer-in-Chief. The Indian Army is organised into seven Commands, the Western, Eastern, Northern, Southern, South Western, Central and Training Command, each under a General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the rank of a Lieutenant General. He is the Commander of a demarcated geographical area and has both field and static formations under his command. The major field formations of the Army are Corps, Divisions and Brigades in that order commanded respectively by a Lieutenant General, a Major General and a Brigadier. The major static formations are Command Headquarters, Independent Sub Areas and Areas. An officer of the rank of a Major General commands an Area while an officer of the rank of a Brigadier commands Sub Areas.

The Army based on functions consists of various Arms and Services. Combat Arms are the fighting component of an Army while Combat Support assignments, that is the Services can be broadly defined as those which provide operational support in terms of logistics, supplies,

technical, communications, intelligence and administrative support to Combat Arms. The induction of women in the Indian Armed Forces is restricted to Combat Support Arms and Services only. The Indian Armed Forces have a formal combat exclusion policy for women in place. Further, though women are routinely employed in field areas in various support roles, they are not permitted to units in field that have any operational commitment or face any enemy threat.

In the Indian Army women are commissioned in the Army Supplies Corp, Army Ordnance Corp, Army Education Corp, Corp of Engineers, Corp of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Corp of Signals, Intelligence Corp, Air Defence Artillery and Judge Advocate General Branch. Women are excluded from the Infantry, Armour and Artillery - the mainstay fighting forces.

Under the current state of affairs, direct combat exclusion precludes the employment of women from the following Arms of the three Services because of the work profile involved. In the Army the Infantry is the queen of the battlefield. The primary role of the Infantry is to hold ground. For this the Infantry fights a close quarter battle using light weapons, closing in to kill or capture the enemy or to repel enemy assaults. Mechanized Infantry is the result of the importance of manoeuvre in the non-linear battlefield of today. Essentially, while Armour punches hole in the defenses to threaten the enemy's depth centre of gravity, Mechanised Infantry exploits the gaps and blazes through the trail created by the bludgeoning Armour. Modern day Armour constitutes of fierce battlefield machines in the form of MBTs (Main Battle Tanks) and ICVs (Infantry Combat Vehicles). These combine a fearsome punch of accurate, day/night capable firepower, which could be delivered while on move. The speed, flexibility and lethality combined together generates an awesome shock effect, which forces the enemy to rethink when threatened with a possibility of annihilation. Due to requirements of physical strength to sustain such jobs, coupled with the inherent hardship of such profiles and the traditional views held regarding women, no roles for women are visualised in such specialities.

Combat Support Arms such as Artillery, even in modern day warfare continue to lend dignity to the battle, which would otherwise culminate in an unholy bloodbath. It uses conventional Artillery guns – field and medium, howitzers and long range multiple barrel rocket launchers to overwhelm the enemy's defences. The frontline role of the Artillery

again precludes the assignment of women from their ranks. With the prominence of Air power, the Air Defence Artillery has also come of age to defend static vital areas and points, as also mobile concentration of Armour. They mainly utilise sophisticated guided missiles and high rate of fire radar controlled guns. The role of Combat Engineers in facilitating the manoeuvre to develop, by enhancing accessibility across obstacle systems is very crucial. Without Combat Engineer support even the most sophisticated and potent ground force complement would never be able to threaten even the forward ground of tactical importance, leave alone an in-depth assault. Keeping in mind the varied profile of the Engineers and Air Defence Artillery both in field and peace areas and the importance of technical know how, women are being inducted in the Engineers and Air Defence Artillery in a measured manner.

### **Indian Air Force**

The Indian Air Force is led by the Chief of Air Staff with Headquarters at New Delhi. He is assisted by six Principal Staff Officers namely Vice Chief of Air Staff, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Air Officer In Charge Administration, Air Officer In Charge Maintenance, Air Officer In charge Personnel and Director General Flight Safety and Inspection. The Indian Air Force is organised into Seven Commands – Western Air Command, South Western Air Command, Central Air Command, Eastern Air Command, Southern Air Command, Training Command and Maintenance Command. An Air Officer-In-Charge who is of the rank of an Air Marshal commands these Commands.

The organisation of the Indian Air Force is based on functions and consists of various Branches such as Flying Branch, Technical Branch, Administrative Branch, Logistics Branch, Accounts Branch, Education Branch, Meteorological Branch and Air Traffic Controller/ Fighter Controller Branch. The Air Force combat fleet is made up of squadrons consisting of a variety of fighter aircrafts, transport aircrafts and helicopters. Wings are the static administrative units of the Air Force. A Wing comprises of a number of lodger units, which includes various Squadrons.

In the Indian Air Force women are commissioned in the Flying Branch as transport and helicopter pilots, in the Technical Branch as Aeronautical Engineers (Electrical) and (Mechanical), in the Ground Duty Branches, that is the Administrative and Logistics Branch, Accounts Branch, Education Branch and Meteorological Branch.

A few courses of women were inducted in the Air Traffic Controller/Fighter Controller Branch, but the commission has since been stopped. Women in the Flying Branch can only fly transport aircraft namely Avro and An 32 and only Chetak and Cheetah helicopters, all other transport aircrafts and helicopters specialties are closed to women. Also closed are all fighter aircrafts.

The supremacy of air power in the last and present day twenty first century has emerged due to the effect that air power has displayed in recent wars. Although Air Alone doctrine is being pursued vigorously it is clear that air power coordinated with other forces is bound to produce synergistic results. Towards this the Air Force has to undertake counter Air Operations, Strategic Interdictions, Counter Surface Force operations, Combat Support Operations like Electronic Warfare, Aerial Reconnaissance and Air Transport Operations. To undertake these airborne operations the Air Force uses its fighter, helicopters and transport aircraft in a variety of roles. Combat missions are the exclusive preserve of Fighters and Attack Helicopters. Women are utilised only in support roles and that too on specific types of transport aircrafts and helicopters. To graduate to types of rotary and fixed wing aircrafts with combat roles is a possibility that is not even under consideration as of now.

## **Indian Navy**

The Indian Navy is led by the Chief of Naval Staff with Headquarters at New Delhi. He is assisted by four Principal Staff Officers, namely the Vice Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of Personnel, Chief of Material and Deputy Chief of Naval Staff. The Navy is organised into three Naval Commands under Flag Officers Commanding-in-Chief. These are the Western Naval Command, Eastern Naval Command and the Southern Naval Command. The Navy has two Fleets – the Western Fleet and the Eastern Fleet. The two Fleets consist of carriers, destroyers and other class of ships. The Navy has a sizeable air wing with various types of fixed wing aircrafts and helicopters. The organisation of Indian Navy is based on functions and consists of various Branches such as Executive Branch, Engineering Branch, Electrical Branch, Naval Aviation and Education Branch. With the world depending on a majority share of trade passing through the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC)<sup>1</sup>, dominance over sea and the ability to deny use of sea to the enemy has become a focal point in the application of Naval Forces. Towards this the Navy attempts to achieve sea control, failing which it

attempts to impose sea denial. Sea blockades, show of force with a plethora of arsenal and coercive gunboat diplomacy are the newer methods by which the Navy seeks to bend the back of the enemy. A variety of class of ships undertake various combat functions.

In the Indian Navy women are commissioned in the Law Cadre, Air Traffic Control (ATC), Logistics Cadre and Education Branch. Women are excluded from the Executive Branch and though Law, ATC and Logistics do form part of the Executive Branch, they are not the executive path to a command. Women are also excluded from the Engineering branch, the Electrical branch, Naval Aviation, Submarines and Diving.

In 1992, to seek their place amongst modern day and emancipated Armies of the world, the Indian Armed Forces took the decision of inducting women. The Air Force in keeping with its liberal image was the first to open its doors followed in quick succession by the Army and the Navy. In all the three Services, women are inducted only as officers and not as Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) or enlisted personnel. In the officer cadre too, all the three Services offer only a Short Service Commission (SSC) to its women officers which is an initial compulsory contractual tenure of five to seven years, and depending upon the Service, extendable to a maximum term of ten years only. For women pilots in the Indian Air Force the initial (and total) contractual period of service itself is ten years. From the year 2002 the Navy and the Air Force have extended the term of the SSC and now the initial contractual service period is ten years extendable to a maximum tenure of 14 years. The Army has since followed suit and extended the term of SSC to fourteen years as well. Unlike male officers, who have the option of a permanent commission (PC) at the time of joining or if they are SSC officers at the time of termination of their contractual period, women officers are not extended the option of a PC at any stage in their service. At the end of their maximum tenure of ten or fourteen years they have to leave the Services. With the first course from all the three Services about to complete their extended term, officially a PC is not under consideration for women officers as of now. Since the writing of this report, the first course of women officers of the Indian Army, have completed their extended tenure of ten years in March 2003 and have been released from service without any further extensions.

## Research Methodology

The research was qualitative and exploratory since most aspects of the issue were subjective in nature. The primary source for the research was the experiences of the sample population along with the researcher's own experience, knowledge of the environment and observations. Sources of information also included data, facts and figures provided by the Manpower and Personnel Directorate of the three Service Headquarters. This was augmented by a literature review of the subject from various books, articles in journals, government and other reports and information on the Internet. Most of the literature available on the subject is American and British reports and sources. The aim of this review was to get a comprehensive background on the subject and to draw on the experiences of other countries where the process of integrating women has been on since the early years of the last century, as the majority of the issues besetting military women are similar world over except for varying cultural contexts. In the Indian context, though there is sufficient background and discourse on women and militarism, very little has so far been specifically written on the aspect of women serving in the Indian Armed Forces. The few research articles that are available on the subject again rely heavily on western sources and are academic in nature. Most are written by authors who are outsiders to the military establishment and therefore unaware of ground realities and the full range of issues affecting military women. There are numerous newspaper and magazine articles available on the subject, which cover various aspects of the phenomenon of women in the Indian Armed Forces, but they are necessarily factual and documentary in nature and convey little that is not already known to an insider in the military establishment.

Amongst the research articles the prominent ones available are two articles by Dr H K Srivastava in the Indian Defence Review Journal of 1992<sup>2</sup> and 1994<sup>3</sup>. Both the articles depend heavily on western sources and explore myths and realities regarding the employment of military women. A very useful and detailed article on the subject is by Air Commodore S M Hundiwala, VM and bar, in the National Defence College Journal. The article presents a thorough background on the phenomenon and discusses the problems that will be faced in the integration of women officers in the Services. Another article by a serving officer is Lt Cdr N P Patnaik's article in Trishul that evaluates the service conditions of women in the Navy.<sup>4</sup> More recent is Dr Anita



Nahal Arya's article in two parts in the (United Services institute (USI) journal that discusses the gender dialectics between men and women in the Indian Armed forces.<sup>5</sup> The researcher's own article in the USI journal discusses the various aspects of women serving in combat Arms. A well researched and useful article, albeit about women in the CRPF is Santosh Singh's article in Manushi, which discusses the prejudices faced by women in the CRPF.<sup>6</sup>

The informant pool for the research was drawn only from a population with the requisite experience of the phenomenon and an awareness of the context, so as to gather facts garnered from first hand experiences and not impressions or feelings on the subject. Both serving and retired men and women officers from the Army, Navy and the Air Force were included. Women officers in the Service bracket from seven months to nine years were included to ensure a range of experiences from which to make evaluations. The upper limit being nine years as when this report was being worked that was the maximum service tenured by any woman in the Services. These women officers were performing a variety of military jobs in diverse geographical locations, such as flying in the Air Force, Air Traffic Controllers in the Air Force and Navy, Engineers and other Administrative specialities in all the three Services. Male officers included in the sample figured from a Service bracket ranging from two years service to twenty-eight years service. This Service bracket is random so as to include a range of views from young officers to those in positions of command. They were again chosen from a variety of specialities including combat arms such as the Infantry, Armour and Artillery in the Army, Combat Aircraft Pilots in the Air Force and Sea-faring officers of the Executive Branch in the Navy amongst other officers serving with women in combat support services. Nine of these officers had served as instructors in their respective training Academies at varying levels of seniority.

To get a wider perspective on the phenomenon and since the researcher had an opportunity to meet some service men and women from abroad, also included were two British male officers one from the Royal Air Force and one from the Royal Navy and an officer from the US Navy. Two women officers one from the Royal Air Force and one from the Royal Navy were also included. Since the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), though being a Para Military Force has a large presence of women, one woman Assistant Commandant from the CRPF was interviewed to gather facts and realities about women in the CRPF.

Doctors and nurses were excluded from the sample pool and references to women in the Armed Forces in the research project do not include them, as these are essential but auxiliary vocations in the Military. Though a part of the officer corp, their career profile and nature of duties remains very specific as medics and sets them apart as a separate entity. Their terms and conditions of service are also different from other officers in the Services, and from the time they are inducted they train first and foremost as medical professionals and not as soldiers. Therefore any professional comparisons with them would not yield desired truths.

Once the sample criterion was established it was decided to choose a diverse sample. To identify trends and patterns across the Services it was important to maximise geographical locations and units with diverse functional missions. For this, subjects were contacted from a wide geographical area, spanning Army and Air Force units located in North Eastern and Western borders, to training establishments and Naval Army and Air Force units located in South India. A stratified random sampling strategy was used where the very obvious sub-groups were officers from the three different Services i.e. the Army, Navy and the Air Force and thereafter the respondents were randomly chosen from within these three sub-groups. The Army being the largest force in terms of sheer strength and numbers followed by the Air Force and finally the Navy, the sample size from the Army and the Air Force establishment were comparatively larger than the Navy. The study sample included the following:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Study Sample Women</b>	<b>Study Sample Men</b>
Army	30	25
Air Force	22	22
Navy	12	11

Most aspects of the issue are derived from the subjective experiences of individuals in the given context of the Armed Forces. To measure the attitudes and feelings of women in the Indian Armed Forces with respect to their experiences, as well as those of men towards women in the Services, a survey research was undertaken with a thrust on qualitative methodologies to systematically evaluate experiences and their context.

To identify common elements in experiences and to analyse the trends/themes that emerge, in-depth interviews with thorough notes by the interviewer were conducted. Open-ended questions were used to encourage informants to tell about their experiences. At times, because of the gender of the researcher some male officers, particularly young officers initially were prone to giving very clichéd responses of the kind ‘that all was well and women are a welcome change’ and had to be probed to be more honest regarding their views and experiences. To broaden the database written questionnaires were also distributed and mailed. Keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the Defence establishment the confidentiality and anonymity of all individuals interviewed was preserved by making no direct references to any one. The quotations derived from interviews and questionnaires which communicated ideas that were only rarely or singularly made, were not included. The interviews and questionnaires focussed on various issues such as those regarding the induction and training of women, the performance of women officers vis-à-vis men, physiological differences between men and women and their relevance, the effect of the presence of women on unit cohesion and morale, double standards and discriminations, the options of Permanent Commission and service in Combat Arms, the possibility of women serving in the ranks, harassment issues and family considerations in conflict with work.

In addition to the above, observation was used to carry out an unstructured field study to gather information. The researcher having served with the Indian Army for six years, which included tenure as an Instructor in the Officers Training Academy, Chennai, had relevant experience of the context and was therefore a participant observer as well. This enabled the researcher to be in a position to evaluate the validity of the reactions and responses of the participants to a given issue. A limitation imposed by this was the possibility of a personal bias in the research process since the observer was so closely involved with the issue. However the researcher’s involvement is also the study’s strength since it allows a view of the situation from an insider’s perspective rather than limiting it to a passive, detached and academic endeavour.

## **Organization of the Report**

The research is a combination of information gleaned from both primary and secondary sources. To provide a background and place the issue in

its context the first section explains the organization of the Indian Armed Forces, the Research Methodology and the organization of the subsequent report. The second section discusses the impact of socialization on the issue, the complex relationship between men, women and the military and explores the influence of these on the phenomenon of women in the Indian Armed Forces. The third section examines the historical and changing perspectives on women in the Armed Forces across various nations, so as to give an idea of the distance the Indian Armed Forces are yet to travel. These sections of the paper rely mainly on secondary sources to make certain inferences and draw parallels. The fourth and fifth sections are very different in tenor as they discuss aspects of training and barriers to the employability of women officers in the Indian Armed Forces. These depend primarily on first-hand sources and experiences of men and women officers, discussing biases at the level of the organization and individuals. The subsequent section deals with combat exclusions and their validity and relies heavily on secondary readings and conjectures, as given the present scenario there is little by way of ground realities in the Indian Armed Forces with which to go by. The seventh section confronts the various stress factors women officers encounter serving in a non-traditional career field. Like the earlier ones, this section too is gleaned from ground experiences of men and women officers. The last section discusses the need for implementing certain monitoring mechanisms to ensure more equitable service for women and relies on secondary sources to describe the efforts of other nations in the direction. The different section put together endeavour to cover all major aspects of the phenomenon of women in the Indian Armed Forces, and to present a comprehensive analysis of the issue.

# **Men, Women and the Armed Forces**

Just as societies have distinct identities based on their traditions and value systems so do the Armed Forces, with each having its own traditions, history and culture. The Armed Forces of any nation are drawn from the citizens of its society and therefore larger social attitudes and thinking are reflected in the culture and the working of the Armed Forces. The degree of acceptance to any new social initiatives within the Armed Forces therefore varies from one nation to another. The success of change is also dependent on the time given to assimilate a change. Traditionally Armed Forces world over were the sole preserve of men. Changes in the status of women in society, demographic needs and the changing nature of warfare itself led to women making inroads in this hitherto male preserve in the early years of the last century. Given the increasing presence of women in Armies world over, towards the later half of the last century the absence of women from the nation's Defence Forces came to be viewed as politically incorrect and unprogressive.

The opening of a hitherto male bastion to include women posed numerous problems about the interaction of men, women and the military. The very nature of the military establishment with its enduring connection with the construct of masculinity affected a real challenge to the assimilation of women. The military masculine association continues to remain invincible to the changes in society and changes in the nature of warfare itself.

## **The Military Masculinity Connection**

Merely the formal opening up of the Services does not ensure professional equality and acceptance of women as reflected by Service policies, attitudes and everyday interactions between men and women. Steeped in centuries of tradition, Armed Forces across the world have been almost exclusively male domains. The connection between the military and masculinity is an enduring one. Military service has long been a masculine rite of passage where boys become men after joining the military. All Armed Forces unabashedly play on this sentiment to swell their rank and file – 'join the Army be a man', 'the Army will make a man out of you', 'we're looking for a few good men' and many such others. This calling of men is perceived as a challenge to their

masculinity with all its associated values of aggression, strength and combativeness. For women to be accepted in this scheme of things raises questions about men's very identity, as women are traditionally viewed as the weak collective 'other', who must be kept out of all rites and traditions of the Military. "The argument for the exclusion of women from the army then is based not on their inherent desire for peace, but because they are imbued with *insufficient masculinity*. To allow women into the army would spike the superior identity established for men through history".<sup>7</sup> To avoid such an impasse the entry for women into this exclusive male bastion is restricted and protected by laws and culture.

The superior identity of men in the Armed Forces and society at large rests on the notion of protection where the strong protect the weak. Men at large perceive themselves as protectors of 'women and children', thus relegating women to a secondary status where they are dependent upon men for their protection. Any subversion of this power equation is perceived as a threat by those in a position of power. As Lt Col Robert L Maginnis in his essay 'The Future of Women in the Army' writes, "Men have traditionally sought to idealistically fight for peace, home and family. They want to protect women, not compete with them. The soldier's world has traditionally been a masculine haven. His masculinity is his facade. Women who enter his masculine world threaten his manhood".<sup>8</sup> In the Indian context too, the masculine military domain is a narrowly conceived one. Women officers even though employed only in support roles are considered intruders in a masculine territory because most men (nearly 70 % of men interviewed) firmly believe that the right place for a woman is in the safe haven of her home and not alongside them.

Further, the concentration of women in support functions with formal exclusions from combat roles is meaningful as the notion of combat is central to the military masculinity connection. Since combat demands strength, fortitude and aggression it affirms masculine superiority and a man's role as the protector and defender. The exclusion of women from combat roles therefore is essential to maintain men's privileged position in the existing military hierarchy. "Women as *women* cannot be allowed into the inner sanctum of combat since this would throw into confusion all men's certainty about their male identity and thus about their claim to privilege in the social order".<sup>9</sup> With the exception of a few NATO countries such as Canada, Norway and Denmark there

are restrictions on women serving in combat specialties in all other Armed Forces. Within the Indian Armed Forces the top echelons of the organization are controlled by men - who with their preconceived notions and biases about the capabilities of women have ascribed a very limited role for them in the Services. Therefore women officers are assigned only to peripheral support roles and are far from any mainstream service activities of combat. This further ensures that women do not figure in the power sharing structure of the Armed Forces and remain concentrated at junior levels, in small numbers.

For the men in the military to let go of their chauvinism and accept that women may have some useful contribution to make to national defence, many layers of belief about the 'correct' roles of men and women in society will have to be shed. With the evolution of society from primitive times to the present, survival no longer dictates that men hunt and gather while women tend the hearth. Neither are wars today fought and won on the basis of physical might alone, with adversaries charging and closing in to kill each other. Modern day armies and battlefields are highly complex structures with a mighty reach, dependent totally on technology and specialists - men and women to proliferate victory. Military prowess is more a matter of brains than brawns and professionalism over all else is respected. In light of these changes and other societal advances, the earlier day rigid composition of sex roles is no longer valid today. From the point of optimal utilization of human resources, Armed Forces world over have realized the importance of acknowledging women as a highly skilled, educated and dedicated pool of resource.

Preconceptions about sex role differences are reinforced in everyday lives, in all spheres, to such an extent, that they are accepted as unquestioning realities by most. Sweeping generalizations about behaviour patterns and conducts of an entire population of men and women have led society at large to associate stereotypical characteristics with each which are generally seen and expressed in terms of opposites. Women are perceived to be passive, intuitive, expressive and irrational while men are active, logical, aggressive and rational creatures. In the Armed Forces, soldierly characteristics are defined as stereotypical masculine characteristics such as aggression, bravery, discipline and endurance and soldiers are trained to imbibe these. While stereotypical feminine characteristics such as compassion, kindness and compliance are anathematised by the Armed Forces and are to be rejected from

day one – it is a common refrain in Service academies that exhorts cadets not to behave like ‘girls’ and ‘sissies’. Given an organizational culture that is derisive of all so called feminine traits, to now accept women in its fold is an exercise fraught with ambiguity.

The practice of making sweeping generalizations, which fit facts partially, limit the optimum utilization of women in the Armed Forces and result in denial of opportunities to capable individuals. It would be rather inept to brand all women as physically and emotionally weak and bar them from military service just as one cannot assume that all men are courageous, strong and fit for military service. Individual traits and not gender define ability. As the testimony of a Gulf war veteran confirms, “I have learned that soldiers are individuals. I have known women who were good soldiers and bad. I have known men I wanted to sell to the enemy because I was determined not to let them get me killed. I have known some outstanding male soldiers as well”<sup>10</sup>. Simply put, some individuals are up to the demands of the profession while others are not. Yet as Steven Goldberg in his essay *Logic and Fallacies about Patriarchy* points out that socialization works on the social law of large numbers. “For example, the statistical reality that male dominance tendencies are more easily elicited than are those of females becomes, on the societal level, the absolute, ‘men are aggressive; women are passive’.”<sup>11</sup> To draw the best from a pool of volunteers, the Armed Forces in their own interest must apply gender-neutral standards and consider individuals on their own merit rather than as men and women to determine their professional roles. By gender-neutral standards one is referring to standards that are free of explicit or implicit reference to gender or sex. These standards are determined by an individual’s ability to carry out a certain task. These standards remain the same for all individuals regardless of their gender or sex.

The above premise though fundamentally sound is antithetical to the very ethos of the military in its present character. Samuel P Huntington in his book *The Soldier and the State* describes military ethics to be collectivist, traditional, historically inclined, power oriented, realistic and conservative. The military ethic is basically corporative in spirit. It is fundamentally anti-individualistic<sup>12</sup>. He goes on to emphasize the importance of the group against the individual and how success in any activity requires the subordination of the will of the individual and his judgment to the will of the group. Since women are now part of the military culture this description of the military ethos extends and applies



to women as well. This raises very basic problems for their acceptance as their claim to inclusion is neither backed by tradition or history and nor is it confident of a collective faith in the abilities and desires of women as a group. In keeping with changing times the Armed Forces must reconsider their determinist ethos based on generalizations as it augurs well neither for the organization nor the affected individuals.

With the inroads made by women in the Armed Forces and in other non-traditional career fields the boundaries of male and female spheres in society are beginning to blur. With women no longer adhering to expected patterns of feminine behaviour the validity of generalizations and sex role stereotyping has become suspect. Women today having the opportunity to serve are joining the Armed Forces as volunteers for all the traditional motives associated with men. These include the desire to lead a disciplined ordered life, a sense of belonging or esprit de corps, attraction for the uniform, adventure and wanting to live in their own person the ideal of a soldier rather than through their fathers or husbands. Within the Armed Forces women are imbibing soldierly and so called masculine values and putting them to good use as well, as demonstrated by their utilisation during the Second World War, the more recent Gulf Wars and as observed in their everyday functioning and interaction within our own Forces. If masculinity is not an innate quality of soldiers and if humanitarianism is not an essential feminine value then perhaps society needs to reconsider its narrow definitions rather than just dismiss the choice of servicewomen as mere assimilation. To delve further into the narrow categories imposed by sex role stereotyping, the role of biology and the influence of our social bequest must be explored further.

### **Biological Determinants vs. Social Determinants**

There are undeniable genetic differences between men and women and some of these physiological differences are of relevance in the Armed Forces, keeping in mind the strength requirements of certain work profiles in the Forces. Other behavioural differences, which provide the context for sex role stereotyping, may have their basis more in our social and cultural bequest rather than endocrinology or at best are a combination of both. These differences are not absolute and can be mitigated by a different set of social influences; after all military training does claim to imbibe aggressive competitive behaviour in cadets. Social differences as it is vary from one culture to another. Male and female behaviour can take quite different forms in different

cultures. Cultures themselves keep evolving and changing over time and space. Just a few decades ago the very idea of women in uniform was unthinkable given the conservative tenor of our society yet now slowly the idea is not only gaining acceptance but also popularity.

Deborah Kolb in *Is it her voice or her place that makes a difference?* describes the issue of biology versus social influences as being “whether we are talking about essential differences between men and women traceable to biology, development and/or social roles or whether what we observe is a function of the differential power relationships between men and women”.<sup>13</sup> She notes that sex is determined by biological factors and physiological differences while gender is essentially a social construct attributable to psychology and social cultures. For others, the answer to obvious male aggression and female compassion is rooted purely in biology in the presence and absence of the much-maligned male hormone testosterone! Biology of course is not destiny and to look beyond testosterone - an individual’s sense of personal identity is to a large extent shaped by social and cultural factors. Conformity to gender roles and contrasting socializing experiences of men and women lead to the exaggeration of these differences.

The development of gender identities starts at birth and exerts a powerful influence on our imagination and reality - pink versus blue, boys’ names versus girls’ names, the process of selecting sex appropriate toys and clothes and so on. Once children start identifying themselves as masculine or feminine they further learn to identify the appropriate roles that are consistent with the chosen gender and learn to behave in gender typed ways that reinforce stereotypes. “Right from childhood while boys are induced to go out, run, hunt, fight, train their muscles and eyes and tame animals. Girls are taught weakness, fright of mice and insects, fears of the bush or climatic conditions”.<sup>14</sup> This socialization is further shaped by other social and cultural factors including the representation of gender in media and popular culture. Almost all children’s books, stories and once they grow up movies, portray men and women in stereotypical ways, where men are the action heroes and women are the damsels in distress that need to be rescued. Popular television advertising too plays upon these traditional roles and conditions young minds. Boys play outdoor games and with guns, girls play with dolls and toy household appliances. Men engage in sports, go for work, come home and appreciate their wives cooking and her skill at getting clothes clean while women shop, clean, cook and look for masculine appreciation.

Biological and environmental determinants of gender roles interact to extend these stereotypes into actual day-to-day activities till they become a habit and a way of life. The stress on women's domestic roles has come to be accepted as a natural process even when both partners shoulder equal work responsibilities. When men do deign to help, they restrict it to a set of chores, mostly superficial while core tasks such as cleaning, cooking and childcare are perceived as primary responsibilities of women. To quote a psychology textbook "apparently freedom from traditional gender roles ends somewhere short of the kitchen sink"<sup>15</sup> ! The responsibility of children too is primarily perceived to be a woman's, thereby requiring her to compromise on her work. Socially, most Indian women, especially the middle class, from where majority of officers are drawn are brought up to believe in the primacy of marriage and household over a career. Once married and later when children arrive most women officers find it difficult to cope with the stress of a military career and the demands of a family.

As long as society perpetuates these differences the same will be reflected in all social institutions including the Armed Forces. Since the members of the Armed Forces are drawn from this very society behind the polished exterior and the uniform, the man himself is fashioned and forged by an unfailing belief in his masculinity and his rightful role in society. Women may interlope in his territory but must return to their own house and keep it in order.

"A few hapless lasses have been allowed to peep into the corridors of the Indian Armed Forces but this should not be imbued with too much importance, as soon they will have to return to their primary responsibilities of being a mother and a homemaker".<sup>16</sup> The ranks of the Indian Armed Forces are almost all made up of men from rural backgrounds, where education and modernization has had little impact and women have been traditionally viewed in a subordinate role. Even amongst officers, whose level of education and exposure are much more, similar chauvinistic attitudes towards women prevail. For these men, to now accept women as their colleagues and superiors requires a long period of change and adjustment, where they can work together and earn mutual respect.

Chauvinisms and chivalry are integral to the characteristics of an average military man and the same can be attributed to part tradition and part colonial legacy of the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces follow

elaborate and exaggerated codes of behaviour with regard to women thereby underlining the differences between the sexes. Service wives are referred to as 'lady wives' and even women officers are referred to as 'lady officers'. The whole concept of 'ladies' smacks of archaic values and is frequently used to remind women officers that they are expected to tread a thin line in their roles as 'ladies' and 'officers'. Their choice of dress, pastimes and even professional duties must be within the acceptable norms of behaviour of ladies. 'Gentlemen officers' with their chivalrous courtesies of course need no constant reminder of their gentlemen status or repeated hints on acceptable conduct.

Amongst military women themselves, there is a difference on how they reconcile the social contradiction of being both a female and a soldier. Some are sure of their feminine identity and are happy with the limited role assigned to them and prefer to draw a line in their social and professional interaction with men while there are others who are vexed by issues of identity and equality. Yet a large majority of women in society do consent to the exercise of social control as they are not overtly coerced into these roles but subtly conditioned into these gender spheres. This continuing endorsement of stereotypical views by women has considerably weakened the cause of equality. Yet if the natural inclination of all women lay towards the domestic sphere and in adhering to such roles, then there should not have been such a clamor and protest for opening all specialties of public spheres to women.

Merely the formal opening up of the Armed Forces to women is no celebration of change until and unless it is accompanied by a corresponding change in the attitude of men and women and in the very ethos of the Services. For this a long process of disassociation from traditional values and social influences has to be initiated and lines of communications have to be re-forged on an individual-to-individual basis. For men and women in the Armed Forces to work as effective members of a team, they have to break free from the narrow confines of stereotypes and generalizations and learn to respect individuals on the basis of capabilities.

With this brief background of some issues that define the relationship between men, women and the military establishment, the next section traces the actual and factual ground covered by military women in Armies across the world in terms of numbers, professional opportunities and other advances made over the years.

# Changing Perspectives on Women in Armed Forces

Though an occasional bright comet of female leadership has streaked through the war skies every now and then, the most common perception of women's involvement in warfare, through the ages, has been in support roles only. Traditionally, societies have always relied on women to defend the home front and when required, to be willing camp followers providing logistics support - thereby freeing men for the serious business of war. These established boundaries of social conducts were occasionally transgressed by women who took to arms for reasons of necessity, arising due to circumstances, a sense of duty and at times out of sheer spirited patriotism.

## Historical Perspective

In popular narratives and historical records there are scant references to the contributions of women in war. This can be attributed to the traditional marginalisation of women's roles and the way history has been constructed as 'his' story of glory and gain. Yet if a serious enquirer were to look under the wraps s/he will find numerous citations to women warriors through the centuries, across time and space, in a wide range, spanning from incredible myths and legends to well-documented modern websites.

'For male culture, armed power represents the most unequivocal expression of power!<sup>17</sup> Hence the legendary Amazons, who subverted the essential power equations between men and women, by taking to arms, invoke the most powerful image of women warriors. The Amazons' further denial of their sexuality totally exorcised them from the sphere of any male control and also posed a threat to the existing social order – a social order in which the roles of men and women had been sharply delineated in terms of public and private domains respectively. The unqualified effect of their image – armed women warriors on horseback, antagonistic to men, has continued to fascinate and serve as one of the primal associations between women and warriors. The myth of the Amazons may not be as much of an exception as we might believe since archaeological finds have revealed the graves of Sycthian women in full military gear, who were supposedly close neighbours of the Amazons.<sup>18</sup>

Since the historical accuracy of a myth, by its very virtue is uncertain, it does not make it less evocative and relevant. More rooted in certainty are the well-documented exploits of later female warriors in the annals of history. The listings are wide in range and numbers from popular Queens that led men to battle, to soldiers in disguise, spies and other unsung soldiers who fought alongside men in battle. The limitations imposed by citing the achievements of a few exceptional individuals is that their exploits are in no way reflective of a larger acceptance of women in the warrior cult and do not prove useful as historic evidence for tackling later date integration issues. 'Most cultures have a Joan of Arc in their past, their greater-than-life heroines who stepped forward in moments of crisis to defend society against invading enemy forces. What is more important, of course, is whether such heroic figures represent the visible manifestation of a society in which women play a prominent part.'<sup>19</sup> These historic figures do not offer any social comment on the status of women in their societies and time as historically societies have sanctioned and tolerated warrior roles for women only under extreme circumstances, when the very existence of the nation has been under threat. Once the peril passes away, there is great reluctance to accept these roles for women and the majority of women soldiers are expected to revert to the darkness of the home and hearth. Examples of Israel and Vietnam are cases in point.

Across time and nations, women have formally performed a variety of roles in their nation's Defence Forces and with the passage of time a tremendous expansion has been witnessed in these roles. A brief historical evolution of these formal roles and the current status of military women in some of the leading nations are described in the ensuing paragraphs.

## **Status of Military Women: An Overview**

Unofficially, women have served with Armies in varying roles dictated mostly by the requirements of the ongoing war/hostilities. It was only in the twentieth century that steps were taken to officially acknowledge and formalise the role and induction of women in the nation's defence forces. One of the earliest countries to formalise the role of women in its Armed Forces was the United Kingdom in 1909. Soviet Russia too was one of the forerunners, with women serving with the Russian Armed Forces as early as 1917 in organised women's battalions and later against the counter revolutionaries in the civil war from 1918-20.

Women in the United States of America have served with the Armed Forces of the nation since as early as 1776 during the American Revolution, but their role was formalised only in 1942 with the establishment of the WAC (Army), WAVES (Navy) and SPARS (Coast Guard) and the establishment of the WASPs (Air Force Service Pilots) and WAF (Air Force) in 1948. In a country like Israel, women have been part of the Israeli Forces since the time of the organisation of the Israeli Defence Forces in 1900s, but their true baptism of fire was during the Israeli war of Independence in 1947-48 where they took part in active combat roles. Women have served with the Canadian Defence Forces since the 1950s in varying capacities and with the French, Belgian, Norwegian and Danish Forces since the early 1970s. Other notable countries which have since integrated women in their Armed Forces are Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Iraq, Japan, Thailand, China, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

The two World Wars provided the greatest impetus to increase and expand the roles of women in the Armed Forces. The demands of industrialisation and the war effort totally transformed the roles of women as they acquired relevant professional skills that were highly valued both in the civil and military spheres. As the Wars continued to gain momentum and mobilisation continued, acute manpower shortages led to increasing roles for women in their respective Armed Forces. Unlike previously unaccounted positions held by women, this time women were inducted as volunteers in uniform in the Armed Forces. They were not integrated in regular units but were organised as a separate Women's Corp and mostly served in support roles in Auxiliary Services. Countries, which instituted Women's Corp included the USA, UK, USSR, Germany, former Yugoslavia, India and others. Thus the American and British WRENs (Navy), WACs (Army), WAVES (Navy), SPARS (Coast Guard), WASPs (Air Force) and others contributed significantly to the war effort and a beginning was made towards acknowledging the formal role played by women in the Armed Forces. The levels of integration varied from nation to nation and their involvement in the war effort.

A large majority of these women served in support roles though thousands of Soviet and Yugoslavian women served in combat positions and actively fought the Germans. In the United Kingdom the number of women in the Armed Forces reached a peak figure of 450,000 between 1939 and 1945 and most served in support roles including



anti-aircraft and search light batteries.<sup>20</sup> In the United States of America by 1945 there were nearly 100,000 WACs, 86,000 WAVES, 18,000 Women Marines and 11,000 SPARs<sup>21</sup>. The Germans during the World Wars showed a consistent reluctance to employ women in the Armed Forces. Severe manpower shortages forced them to establish the Armed Services Women's Auxiliary Corps in the 1940s. Though numerous women performed the same jobs as men during the war, the Germans did not consider their female auxiliaries to be soldiers<sup>22</sup>. In Russia the much acclaimed, massive involvement of women soldiers during World War II is the stuff of which legends are made. More than 70% of the 800,000 Russian women who served in the Soviet Army fought at the front. About 1,000 plus women were trained as fighter and military transport pilots and downed hundreds of enemy aircraft in numerous combat engagements. Three aviation Regiments, the 586<sup>th</sup> Women's Fighter Regiment, the 587<sup>th</sup> Women's Bomber Regiment and the 588<sup>th</sup> Women's Night Bomber Regiment utilised only women pilots, engineers and mechanics. Women also served as snipers and a single sniper had to her credit 309 Germans! 91 women were awarded The Hero of the Soviet Union medal, the highest award for military valour for their heroism in combat.<sup>23</sup>

In the era that followed the World Wars, initially there was a downsizing in the strength of the Women's Corps and in some nations they were abolished altogether, while in other nations they were reconstituted a few years later. Almost all nations that had heavily relied on women in the war effort maintained a token presence of women and provided them with limited opportunities in peacetime service in their regular establishments. Such an arrangement continued to pay lip service to the principles of equality and also provided the framework to mobilise womanpower in the event of a national emergency. In the US their strength was reduced from almost 350,000 to a little below 8,000!<sup>24</sup> In Russia and Germany they were completely demobilised and resurfaced in certain specialities much later in the seventies. In UK too demobilisation became necessary but a women's element was retained in peacetime Armed forces.

After the World Wars, most future hostilities were on a limited scale such as the war in Korea, Vietnam and the Arab-Israel conflict in 1947-48. These limited wars and conflicts once again offered increasing roles and possibilities for women to be utilised in the nation's defence establishment. Usual manpower shortages resulted in increasing combat



roles for women of the defending nations as every hand, irrespective of gender, mattered. For other involved nations such as the United States in the Korean and Vietnam War, the increasing reluctance of troops to participate in alien theatres led to the mobilisation of all available hands including women. Women in Vietnam and Israel, who fought during the hostilities, underwent a true baptism of fire and thus earned the status of combatants; although the practice was later discontinued; they continued to be quoted in every combat exclusion debate following the period.

In the ensuing years in order to fulfil existing personnel requirements and to have a trained reserve in case of any future national emergency, Armies that had retained the Women's Corp decided to grant them a permanent status. Further demands for women's rights and equal opportunities by citizens and courts resulted in legislations, which prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of sex and gave an impetus to the cause of women in the Armed Forces. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972 in the United States and the Sex Discrimination Act in Britain led to a greater expansion of roles for women in the Military.<sup>25</sup> In 1976, mounting external pressure from the Congress in the United States led to the opening of the Service Academies to women. By the 1970s most Militaries, which had retained their women soldiers or started induction, also abolished the separate administrative arrangement of a Women's Corp and women were integrated into units of regular Armies. In Britain this change came about as late as 1990 while in Israel the Women's Corp is retained till date though only as an 'administrative cadre governing training assignments and military career of women in the IDF' as women now serve with regular units. Israel also remains perhaps the only country where all unmarried women, who have not borne children, in the age group of 18 to 26, have to perform compulsory military service for a period of one year and nine months as compared with three years for men. After the conscription period they have the option to continue their service or leave.<sup>26</sup>

Over the passage of time in Armies across the world, following a series of long contentions, the terms and conditions for service and promotion policies for women were and are slowly being made at par with men. Most changes that were affected including opening up of a greater number of operational specialities were the direct result of public opinion and legal actions taken to implement legislations favouring

equality. Attitudinal barriers too dictated to a large extent the role and employability of women in a nation's defence forces and were harder to overcome. Countries like Canada, Norway and Denmark have been at the forefront of opening all functions and units to women. Canada has the privilege of being the first NATO country to open all occupation fields in the Armed Forces to women. Canada along with Australia and the United States boasts of women fighter pilots as well. In 1989, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal directed that all restrictions barring women from positions in the Canadian Forces be repealed, except for duties aboard submarines. Trials for inducting women in combat arms for 300 positions on experimental basis were already underway by then. But out of the 21 female volunteers only one was successful compared to all 20 male applicants. Subsequently in March 2001 the restriction on serving in submarines was done away with.<sup>27</sup> Norway and Denmark rank amongst the most progressive nations as far as women soldiers are concerned. Norway has the distinction of being the first NATO country to allow women to serve on submarines. Women soldiers train and are employed on equal terms with men. Women are also allowed to serve in all other combat functions since 1985. Denmark too has opened all functions and units in the Armed Forces to women in 1988 after trials were conducted to induct women in combat arms in 1985 and 1987. Women were inducted in the Belgian Armed Forces in 1975 and since there are neither legislations nor military policies existing that exclude women from combat or other military positions hence all occupational specialities are open to women.<sup>28</sup>

An interesting insight on service women in Denmark and Norway is that Danish and Norwegian service women serve or have served in almost all operational functions in the Armed Forces, except for paratroopers and marine commandos, since to-date no woman has been able to meet the entry requirements. This should serve as the guiding principle for employment of women soldiers in other countries as well - whence women should be allowed access to all military occupations and be given the opportunity to try for these positions without lowering entry requirements or compromising on standards to accommodate women.

In other countries, the opening of all operational specialities has not been so rapid but a gradual measured exercise. In the United States, women were permitted to be assigned aboard ships in 1978 and later in

1994 aboard combat ships. Though flying as a career option was opened in 1976, only by 1994 were women flying fighter aircrafts in combat missions. The only career fields that remain barred for women today are submarines in the Navy and ground combat specialities such as Armour, Infantry, Special Forces, Cannon Field Artillery, Multiple Launch Rocket Artillery and Forward Area Air Defence Artillery in the Army.<sup>29</sup> In the United Kingdom, UK's Armed Forces being an equal opportunity employer nearly 96% of posts in the RAF, 73% in the Royal Navy and 70% of the Royal Army are open to women. Women are only excluded from ground combat positions in the Army, submarines and as mine clearance divers in the Navy and the Royal Air Force Regiment in the Air Force.<sup>30</sup> In the Australian Defence Forces women can be employed in approximately eighty eight per cent positions. There are no women in combat roles as women are excluded from categories of employment classified as direct combat duties. These include clearance diving teams in the Navy, Infantry, Armour, Artillery and Combat Engineers in the Army and Airfield Defence Guard and Ground Defence officers in the Air Force. Women though are permitted aboard certain class of submarines and do fly fighter aircrafts.<sup>31</sup> The French Armed Forces permit women to serve in all positions including those in the operational forces, except in frontline combat units, which involve direct and prolonged contact with hostile forces. This restricted access is mainly on account of physical and practical requirements of the job.<sup>32</sup>

Certain countries though having utilised the services of women in varying capacities during wartime do not visualise the same role for them in peacetime Service. In Germany for instance women were readmitted in Services only in 1975 and that too only as doctors and later in the military music services. Recent changes have forced the government to open all combat units of the German Armed Forces to women, with possible exceptions to special combat units after a directive by the European Court of Justice in favour of a case by Tanja Kriel in the year 2000.<sup>33</sup> In Israel too the much touted combatant role for women has been consigned to history and presently women serve only in combat support roles. Most women serve in technological positions, intelligence, and training. In Russia, the heroism displayed by women during the World Wars is mostly underplayed now and currently women serve only in combat support specialities and in other staff positions or are engaged in "educational and cultural work", that is, sportswomen, etc.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the large strides made towards increasing the role of women in Armed Forces world over, their numerical strength across countries still remains comparatively very low. In the United States women make up about 14% of the active duty Force and as on October 1994, more than 92% of the career fields and 80% of the total jobs were open to women. Women have actively participated in Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989, Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983 and were deployed during the Gulf war, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation in Iraq. Nearly 33,000 women participated in Operation Desert Shield comprising 7% of the total force strength. 13 women died as a result of hostilities, 21 were wounded in action and two were taken prisoners of war.<sup>35</sup> Australia too claims to be one of the forerunners of women's participation in the military in terms of percentages. Yet women's participation in the Armed Forces in both permanent and reserved force runs at 14.2% only.<sup>36</sup> Canada and United Kingdom follow close in terms of numbers with approximately 18,000 women comprising about 10% of the current Services strength in the United Kingdom<sup>37</sup> and nearly 12% of the Services strength in Canada.<sup>38</sup> Belgian military women make up to 7% of the total force while about 13,300 French women make about 7.5% of the current force strength of the French Armed Forces<sup>39</sup>. In Russia approximately 12,000 women serve in the nation's Armed Forces of which about 3,100 are Officers.<sup>40</sup> In China 136,000 women soldiers comprise about 4% of the total strength of Chinese Armed Forces<sup>41</sup>. In Denmark and Norway despite lifting of all previous combat restrictions there has been little change in numbers and percentages. Women have since the eighties continued to form about 5% and 3% of the total strength respectively.<sup>42</sup> At a glance the percentage of women serving in various Defence Forces is presented in the table below:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Percentage of women in active Service strength</b>
United States of America	14
Australia	14.2
United Kingdom	10
Canada	12
Belgium	7
France	7.5
China	4
Denmark	5
Norway	3

A brief overview of the status of military women in the last century, across a spectrum of countries, reveals the advances made by them in terms of increasing roles and numbers. With this in background, a look into the brief history and status of military women in India will reveal the extent of the journey yet to be undertaken.

## **India**

There are references to women soldiers in Indian history but most are glorified accounts of individual bravado and heroism such as the much-quoted Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. There is no formal history of women's service with the Armed Forces in India before the World Wars. During World War II, faced with a growing shortage of suitable men for support duties, a decision was taken to utilize the services of women instead. Accordingly the Women's Auxiliary Corp-India (WAC-I) was created by ordinance XIII of 1942. The Corp was officially launched from the Adjutant General's branch on April 19, 1942. All the three services had WAC- I on their strength. Despite the conservative background of our society there was no dearth of volunteers for the Women's Corp. Women from all classes of the society came forward and 'by the time the war ended, the Corp had grown to the strength of 10,000 representing as many as 27 communities and speaking as many languages. Nowhere in the world a women's organisation was so diversified and yet working with a single will for the same objective'.<sup>43</sup> After the war WAC-I was demobilised between August 1946 and April 1947. Women also served in the Indian National Army and fought for the country's independence. Colonel Lakshmi Swaminathan led the Rani Jhansi Regiment of the Indian National Army against the British in Burma.

In post-independence India, while formulating the Constitution, the equality of women, discrimination against them and equal opportunity for employment were thoroughly dealt with in accordance with the prevailing social ambience. Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution dealt with the equality of women and discrimination against them, while Article 16 dealt exclusively with equal opportunity for employment. Showing discretion, Articles 16 (3) and 33 were inserted in order to exempt the Armed Forces from the provisions of the Fundamental Rights with regards to employment of women. The Army Act of 1950, the Air Force Act 1950 and the Navy Act of 1957 also stipulated that women were not eligible for enrolment in the Services and any deviation could be made only through a special notification. A government

sanction was thus mandatory for all cases of women entry in the Armed Forces.<sup>44</sup>

A large number of women drawn by the glamour and exclusiveness of the Armed Forces have always aspired to join this privileged fraternity. The Service Headquarters, till 1991, conveniently quoted the Constitution to evade these women aspirants and absolved themselves of all responsibility. As early as 1972, a woman aspirant, Ms Asha Goel, who was denied the opportunity to join the JAG (Judge Advocate General) branch of the Army took to legal recourse, but her petition was dismissed by the Delhi High Court as Section 12 of the Army Act 1950 did not violate Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution.<sup>45</sup> Like her there were numerous other women who were assailed with the feeling that they were born far ahead of their times when the Armed Forces finally did open their haloed portals to women in 1992.

The legal limitations barring women from entry in the Defence Forces were not difficult to overcome, as earlier examples of other countries had proved. What marked the Indian context was the total absence of any public opinion or debate on the subject. There was no visible impetus from egalitarian and feminist advocates for repealing such laws and providing equal opportunities to women in all spheres of society. No pressure from outside was brought to bear on the military, a profession that is as it is reticent in its style of functioning and eschews all outside interference or influence.

In 1993, when the three Services finally did start inducting women, it was hardly the result of a great organisational belief in equal opportunity or a pressing need to tap a new source of human resources. It was more a populist measure paying lip service to the ideas of being politically correct and emancipated in today's progressive world. Scant attention was paid with regard to its implications on either organisational goals or individual careers. The official stand admits partially to reasons of political correctness leading to the induction of women. But they also maintain that it was to fulfil a shortage of officers being experienced for various reasons, particularly at the junior levels of Majors and below and their equivalent in other Services.<sup>46</sup> Instead of compromising on standards, the Services thought it more prudent to induct qualified women over not so qualified men. The above premise though fundamentally correct does not hold ground in the light of numbers. In the nine years that women have been in the Forces the combined strength

of women in all the three Services i.e. the Army, Navy and Air Force is under a 1,000 while the acknowledged shortage of officers for the Army alone is 12,554!<sup>47</sup>

As of now the Government of India has sanctioned the intake of women officers for ten years only, a case has been taken up to continue the induction and a favourable response is almost assured. Presently the number of women inducted forms a negligible part of the Armed Forces. In terms of numbers and percentages so far only 1150 women have served in the Indian Army, making up to approximately 1.5 % of the officer cadre at a given time. In the Indian Air Force the number of women who have served so far is 571 and stand at an approximate total of 3.7 % of the officer corp. In the Navy the total strength of women officers is 250 and approximately 1.5% in terms of percentages.<sup>48</sup> The above figures clearly indicate that the total number of women in the Armed forces is miniscule. This is so because women have a limited number of vacancies assigned for them. In the Army, the maximum total number of vacancies identified that are tenable by women is 1,040. As of now no further increase in their numbers is visualized. In the Air Force the Government has sanctioned induction of women officers up to 10% of the cadre strength of each branch. In the Navy, the Naval Headquarters comment that there are no separate vacancies identified for women and that they compete equally for the vacancies with the men. However, the efficacy of this statement has not been verified from their recruiting advertisements.<sup>49</sup>

The decision to induct women in the Indian Armed Forces once taken, the implementation had an inexplicable immediacy to it. Despite the vast available experience of numerous western models and historical evidences at hand, the Indian Armed Forces did not think it imperative to invest in any meaningful research on their so-called “social experiment”. Consequently, the issue since its inception has lacked a systematic and planned approach. Policy directives on the role and employability of women in the Armed Forces have remained situational and reactionary in nature with perhaps the most serious lacunae being the absence of any future vision.

A brief comparison of the status of women in the Armed Forces of most other countries and India will show that the battle has just begun in India. Discriminatory policies did exist in all nations but are gradually being eliminated as women prove their abilities and assert their rights

to be a part of their nation's defence forces. During the course of my interviews, I had an opportunity to speak at length with a woman officer from the (Royal Air Force) RAF and from the Royal Navy. Talking about common concerns of women in the Armed Forces such as role employability, organisational culture, attitudinal barriers and domestic pressures, I was struck by the realisation that as in many other spheres here too, we are many years behind in addressing issues influencing the induction and integration of women in our Armed Forces. Perhaps it would be prudent to learn from the experiences of other nations and effect change rather than repeat the same mistakes all over again.

The following sections discuss some pertinent issues and concerns that confront military women in India starting with their selection process and training.



# **Selection and Training**

## **– An Overview**

Military readiness is defined not only by the state of the equipment or weapon systems but more importantly by the efficiency, effectiveness and morale of the force. Indisputably, it is the wo/man behind the machine that maintains the leading edge of a professional Army. To retain this advantage the Armed Forces have to draw the best talents from among a given pool and train them to be disciplined, motivated and ready soldiers. Selection and training are not only the starting points of this transformation, but also essential elements in vindicating the competency of a military force.

In the early nineties to maintain the professional ethos of the force, it was decided by the three Services to tackle manpower challenges by drawing from a pool of hitherto untapped source of qualified women. To elicit the best from amongst this reserve, laid down standards were maintained to select and train the ‘right stuff’ to meet the requirements of the Services. Since women are selected only as officers and granted commission restrictively in Combat Support Arms and Services<sup>50</sup> there are separate selection and training goals laid down for men and women.

### **Selection Procedure**

The mode of entry for women is restricted to a Short Service Entry only. Unlike men, women do not have the option of a Permanent Commission (PC) whether it be a Cadet Entry (after class XII) through the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, a premier tri Services training establishment; or a Direct Entry, PC through the Combined Defence Services Exam, both exams that are conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Also the National Cadet Corp (NCC) entry is not applicable to women candidates. This limited entry narrows the career prospects of women officers in the face of this certainty that they may serve only for a maximum of fourteen years.

The selection procedure is initiated by an advertisement in all the leading dailies and the Employment News. The Army advertises regularly once in six months while the Air Force and Navy do so as and when vacancies occur. A career in the Armed Forces is much sought after amongst women with the number of applicants far exceeding the vacancies. For

example in the first course of the Navy nearly 27,000, applications were received for 22 vacancies<sup>51</sup>. The case for Army and Air Force were similar. The reasons for this vary from it being a unique and exciting career option, the prospect of an adventurous life, a love for the uniform, an awe of a military model and after all it being a secure government job. Over the years the popularity of the Armed Forces as a career option for women has remained steady, except that recently the Armed Forces are facing some difficulties in getting the requisite number of technical graduates and candidates to fill flying vacancies.

## **Qualitative Requirements**

Only unmarried women between the age group of 19–27, having the relevant qualifications, which vary from the various branches/Corps of each Service in which women are inducted, can apply for a commission in the Armed Forces. It is a commendable initiative by the Army to extend this opportunity to allow issueless widows and divorcees and widows of Defence personnel to apply for grant of commission in the Indian Army. The Air Force and Navy have since followed suit. This has helped a number of Service widows to have the support and confidence to start life from a new beginning.

In keeping with the image and ethos of a professional force, all the three Services have very specific qualitative requirements in terms of educational qualifications for their various branches. For example for all technical corps/branches in the three services only engineering graduates are eligible. For the Education Branch a post graduation is a must, for the Judge Advocate General Branch a law degree and similarly professionally relevant, basic qualifications are laid down for all Corps/branches in all the three Services. In the case of the Air Force and the Navy, these entry level laid down qualitative requirements are gender neutral and are the same for men and women for a given branch. The only difference being that, men are short-listed through a Combined Defence Services Exam (CDSE) conducted by the UPSC, while the women's applications are short listed by the Service Headquarters on the basis of merit only. The Army on the other hand, has separate qualitative requirements for men and women, even when they are granted a commission in the same Corp. The Army emphasizes on technical/specialist vacancies for women while underscoring a graduate entry for the majority of its vacancies for men. It is mandatory for all male entries to qualify in the CDSE except for certain technical male

entries, and NCC direct entry where the applications are short-listed by the Service Headquarters. While in the case of women, like with the Air Force and the Navy the initial short-listing of applications is done by the Army Headquarters. Apart from having the requisite qualifications, in all the three Services, women aspirants should also have the prescribed minimum acceptable physical standards.<sup>52</sup>

The practice of short-listing the applications of women aspirants by the three Service Headquarters merely on the basis of qualifications and class obtained therein, without a written exam definitely compromises standards. This is so because qualifications are not standard across the country, due to a lack of a consistent university standard or syllabus. All the three Services ask for a first class graduate degree with concessions made only for those having higher qualifications. This requirement does not fulfil any purpose, as there is no even or consistent University syllabus/standard or grading system across the country. For example the Delhi University, which has a high academic standing, has only a handful of first divisions compared to the en masse first divisions granted by most provincial universities. Therefore the CDS exam conducted by the UPSC, which is a mandatory requirement for almost all male aspirants except certain entries as mentioned above, should be made applicable for women candidates as well. Since men do not have the concession of not writing an exam, it should not be extended to women either.

The Army in particular could review its present policy of reserving the majority of its vacancies for women with technical and specialist qualifications. For example in the Women's Special Entry Scheme (Officers) [WSES (O)] course commencing in March 2002, out of 50 vacancies, nearly 36 vacancies are earmarked for technical graduates/specialists and only 14 vacancies are for general duty.<sup>53</sup> Retaining the majority of vacancies for specialists, though serving the organizational goal well, has certain other implications, which need to be scrutinised. Firstly, it denies women the chance to apply on a gender-neutral standard since in the case of men the majority of vacancies are a graduate entry with only a handful of vacancies for specialists such as technical graduates, postgraduates and lawyers. Secondly this uneven division of vacancies narrows the Army's selection pool of women candidates drastically. Women, who qualify the SSB in high merit repeatedly, often never make it to the training academy due to a shortage of general duty vacancies. Conversely, women candidates with specialist qualifications,

irrespective of their merit in the SSBs get selected due to fewer numbers of candidates possessing such specific qualifications and because of comparatively larger number of vacancies. Moreover it is a telling comment on the Army, which prefers only to invest in the training of its men, while drawing from a source of already professionally qualified women. The researcher has come across numerous women candidates who have qualified and been recommended by the SSBs as many as eight times but have not made it to the training academies due to shortage of vacancies.

## Method of Selection

After the initial short-listing of applications by the three Service Headquarters, short-listed candidates are detailed to appear at the **Service Selection Boards** (SSBs) to undergo a battery of tests as detailed under. The Army and the Navy Service Selection Boards are located at Allahabad (UP), Bhopal (MP), Coimbatore (TN) and Bangalore (Karnataka) while the Air Force SSBs are located at Dehradun (Uttaranchal), Varanasi (UP) and Mysore (Karnataka). The selection procedure at the SSBs comprises of a series of scientifically designed tests to test a candidate's personality for **Officer Like Qualities**. These include leadership, which is the art of leading people to follow a line of action by example, loyalty, integrity, discipline and a fine sense of duty amongst others. The procedure commences with an **Officer Intelligence Rating Test**, which is a screening test and is therefore mandatory to pass. This is followed by a series of **Psychological Tests**, which include Thematic Appreciation Tests, Word Association Test, Situation Reaction Tests and a Self-Description. Next are the **Group Tasks**, which include group planning exercises and a command task. These are primarily outdoor tasks where candidates work in groups to cross various hurdles and obstacles and are responsible for the execution of the command task. A group discussion and lecturette also form part of the group tasks. The **Individual Obstacle Course** tests the agility and physical prowess of a candidate. The selection procedure culminates with an unstructured **Interview** that assesses communication skills, confidence, maturity, leadership potential, and overall attitude. Aspiring aviators have to undergo an additional test i.e. the **Pilot Aptitude Battery Test** (PABT), a unique test that is administered to a candidate only once in a lifetime. Successful candidates are recommended by the Selection Board and are made to undergo a detailed medical board, which determines their medical

fitness. Candidates cleared by the medical board are placed in the merit list and after a police verification of their character are detailed for training as per the number of vacancies.

The aim of the selection process is to source the best talent from a given pool of applicants. The process in its present framework is a time-tested method designed to test a candidate's mental and physical aptitude for the Armed Forces. The selection process per se is gender neutral where the gender of the candidate is inconsequential and has no bearing on the end results of the tests. To optimise training, keeping in mind the physical differences between men and women, the Service headquarters could incorporate certain prerequisite physical standards for women to lay off the pressure from training. Addressing these concerns at the selection stage itself will result in choosing women candidates who are best suited for the physical rigours of a training establishment and a later career in the Armed Forces.

Once women candidates reach the training stage the task that takes the utmost time and effort is getting them into good physical shape. Apart from a few physically fit women, most women cadets have an uphill task reaching the minimum physical fitness standards prescribed. This can be largely attributed to the prevailing culture in our society, in which women are rarely encouraged to participate in any games or outdoor activities. Except for a small number of women, most women never have the opportunity to participate in any organized sports activity. Consequently, most women who join have had little opportunity/inclination to exercise and shape their muscles for the rigors of Army training. This results in undue time and effort being devoted at the training academies to bringing women up to a respectable standard of physical fitness so as to ensure that they pass the mandatory tests. This also leads to far too many cases of pelvic and stress fractures and other related leg injuries as compared to their male counterparts. To decrease this loss in training time due to physical difficulties and related injuries and to ensure a decent standard of physical fitness, the Services would do well to introduce and strictly implement mandatory physical testing prior to training so as to have some base to build upon during training. Towards this, while advertising for vacancies they should provide preparatory information on the physical standards required and also on how to cope with the rigours of cadet training. Once a candidate is selected, during her medical board, a bone mass density test could also be included to avoid chances of undue fractures and injuries.

The nature of a military profession requires certain minimum physical standards in terms of height and weight. For men the minimum acceptable height is 157.5 cm relaxed only for certain ethnically short-statured groups. For women in the Air Force, the minimum acceptable height is 152 cm and in the Navy 147 cm again relaxed only for certain ethnically short-statured groups. In the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) the physical standards for women are higher than any of the three Services with the minimum acceptable height being 157cms and a corresponding weight, which is not less than 46 kg. While in comparison the minimum height acceptable for women in the Army is the lowest - a mere 142cm, with a corresponding minimum weight of 36 kg. These minimum laid down requirements are too low, as observation has shown that women adhering to the minimum standards, have difficulty in coping with the privations of training. Their weight lifting capacity is hampered which in turn affects their weapon training, rifle drill, route marches and other outdoor training activities. Moreover it also does not portray a soldierly image and compromises the bearing and manner of an officer, especially if a woman has a tendency to put on weight at a later stage. The Army would do well to adopt similar minimum physical standards as its sister Services. This common point of concern also emerged in all the interviews conducted with Army women officers. Since March 2002 the Army has become aware of this detriment and has since revised the minimum acceptable height and weight standards to 152cms and 42kgs respectively.

The endeavour of Armed Forces world over is to build strong foundations for resolute structures; therefore selecting the right candidate with the right qualitative requirements is crucial to the laying of this foundation. Training is the next brick in the wall.

## **Training**

Training is a very important and vital phase in a soldier's life as it is here that s/he is initiated to the military ethos and value systems. The aim of a Service Academy is to inculcate in a cadet knowledge and discipline; to develop their qualities of leadership, self-reliance and initiative; to develop their character and good citizenship in the widest sense; and to develop in them an interest in physical fitness, professional knowledge and the Services way of life. It prepares cadets for all elements of service: physical, mental, and emotional and gives them the basic tools necessary to perform the roles that will be asked of

them during their career. The process of transforming a civilian into a soldier commences from this point and is a traditional rite of passage. More than just pushups, rifle drill and mess etiquettes, basic training is a journey of self-discovery. The process is not limited to a structured training schedule which includes classes in physical and weapon training, service subjects, parades and camps but is a continuous mentoring process by instructors and seniors at the Academy. The rituals at the Academy initiated by seniors and staff, more often than not in terms of intense physically demanding sessions are an integral part of Academy life. These constitute an informal grooming process that in some very basic sense breaks a trainee in terms of his mental and emotional state and then builds him again to be a soldier. The ego is annihilated in this process, through testing the limits of physical and mental endurance till every new situation is perceived as a challenge and cadets discover their inner strength. This spirit of fortitude and endurance earned in the Academy holds them in good stead and prepares them to deal with adverse situations faced later during their tour of duty. The core values and lessons such as initiative, endurance, hard work and team spirit inculcated at this stage abide by a soldier not only throughout his career but also through his entire life. As they say – ‘once a soldier always a soldier’. Apart from this initiation, training is also about military socialization and learning military customs and courtesies. In this respect, men and women have common training goals. Problems to integration arise mainly due to the attitudes and perceptions of both men and women as well as due to the inherent differences between them.

## **Training Establishments**

In Training Establishments, women cadets are routinely referred to as ‘Lady Cadets’ and subsequently in Service all women officers are referred to as ‘Lady Officers’. While in comparison only the Army refers to its male cadets, as ‘Gentleman Cadets’ (GCs). Once they become officers the epithet of ‘Gentleman’ is dropped as the term officer is supposed to subsume the term Gentleman. While ‘men’ and ‘women’ are biological definitions used to distinguish between the sexes, the terms ‘ladies’ and ‘gentlemen’ are social constructs circumscribed with related and expected codes of behaviour. Therefore to break free of such narrow determinations, henceforth in this project ‘Lady Cadets’ will be referred to as ‘Women Cadets’ and ‘Lady Officers’ as ‘Women Officers’.



The three Services have separate training establishments for their pre-commissioning training. An exception is the **National Defence Academy (NDA)**, which trains undergraduate cadets of all the three Services. These cadets train together for three years, for later absorption as permanent commission officers, via the respective Service Academies into all the three Services. This unique tri Services institution fosters a network of connections between its select fraternity that lasts throughout their Service career and proves useful in many situations. The women's entry being SSC for all the three Services, women are therefore not eligible for the NDA and therefore are excluded from fostering similar connections essential for a successful military career.

The **Army** conducts its pre-commission training for SSC officers and PC officers separately. PC officers train at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, while SSC officers train at the Officers Training Academy (OTA), Chennai. Since women only have the option of a SSC they train at the OTA Chennai. Women cadets at the OTA train for shorter duration as compared to even SSC gentleman cadets. The training duration for women is 24 weeks while for the men it is 44 weeks. There is no organisational rationale offered for this difference. The same syllabus as for the men is compressed into the 24 weeks of the women's training. The present system merely resorts to allotment of lesser numbers of periods to teach the same topic to the women cadets as those that are scheduled for the GCs. Also 24 weeks are insufficient as they are too short a period to achieve the required physical standards necessary for a military career. This has led to repeated demands, of both instructors and cadets, for increasing the training duration. This was highlighted not only during the interviews conducted by all Army women officers, but is also a common point during the feedback sessions of cadets and instructors at the Academy<sup>54</sup>. "Training period of women cadets must be enhanced to ten months to make it at par with the GCs in all respects,"<sup>55</sup> was an oft repeated sentiment. No change has been initiated so far. Throughout their Service career, women officers are derided for the abridged training they receive by other male officers, without any thought to the fact that they have little or no say in determining the duration of their training. The Army could take a leaf or two from its sister Services and on priority make the duration of training at par with the male SSC i.e. increase it from its current duration of 24 weeks to 44 weeks. This will enable the Army to have better trained, better groomed and physically fitter women officers.



The **Air Force** has only one Alma Mater that is the Air Force Academy (AFA) at Hyderabad. Women train along with other SSC cadets while PC courses run separately and concurrently. In the flying branch, since women are being inducted only in the Transport and Helicopter fleet, there are some differences in the training syllabus and the distribution of periods. For all other courses there is no difference regarding the official syllabus. Basic training in the Air Force lasts from 50 weeks to 74 weeks whence basics of flying/ ground duty subjects, is taught. A very serious, begrudging aspect in the Air Force is that women who during flying training fail to make the grade and get suspended are sent home. This is unlike the policy for suspended male cadets who are absorbed in other branches of the Air Force. This is a very sensitive issue since not only do these women have to confront failure, but also have to deal with a total loss of career and have to start afresh. In the interest of fairness and equality, women should be extended the same opportunities that are available to men.

The **Navy** trains its women cadets at the Naval Academy, Goa, along with other SSC cadets. At the Naval Academy too PC courses run separately and concurrently. The Navy's basic training is an orientation course for 20 weeks, with no difference in the training duration and syllabus for SSC men and women cadets.

Formally prying open the doors of the prestigious Service Academies was never an issue in the induction/intake of women in the Indian Armed Forces. Keeping in mind individual Service requirements and the profile visualized for women in each, certain alterations were made within the existing framework to accommodate women. The real issue was the acceptance and integration of women by the male cadets and officers in the Academies and subsequent Service life. Since women were treading on unfamiliar grounds and given the conservative backdrop of the Armed Forces there were hesitations and doubts about what they could accomplish. Therefore all the three Service Academies adopted a cautious approach and did not completely integrate the training of women with the male cadets. Living areas were segregated and physical standards were lowered for women. Further, Service subjects and outdoor exercises were modified to accommodate them. These concessions coupled with the mostly patronizing, derisive and sometimes supporting attitudes of men resulted in a plethora of integration issues cropping up at the Academies. It is important that these issues of differences be resolved at the training stage itself, as

they have ramifications on the future acceptance of women in the Services. For men and women to work together as effective members of a team and for women to feel a sense of belonging they have to be included and integrated in all military processes from day one.

Integration of men and women at training stage is possible to the extent it is extended to the training syllabi and related training activities such as drill, physical training, weapon training, academic and other outdoor classes. This can be implemented on a gender neutral standard with only concessions made to accommodate the lower physical threshold of women. Yet the greatest challenge to integration during training lies not in the training syllabus or the routine but in the diehard attitudes of men and women. Having been a cadet and served as an instructor in a training establishment the researcher encountered these attitudes first hand. Out of a class of 36 GCs only 6 believed that women had a place in the Armed Forces and should train with them. To quote a GC, “Women are treated with kid gloves at the Academy, there are double standards for women, this talk of equality is absurd”.<sup>56</sup> Similarly in a class of 23 women cadets only 7 believed that they were equal to their male counterparts in all respects and were willing to undergo the same privations as the men. Women cadets were themselves aware of the low opinions their male course-mates had of them, and this alienated them as a group even further – “There is little sense of belonging or acceptance at the Academy, after a while this constant sparring with our immature male course mates begins to wear a little thin and perhaps we are best on our own”<sup>57</sup>.

Since women have been inducted and are a part of the Services it is important to integrate women not for any abstract notions of equality but for optimal utilization of *all* force strength. If the process is not initiated at the training stage itself women will never be considered equal and legitimate partners in the Armed Forces. All women officers interviewed, irrespective of Service vouched for integrated training in all respects including duration, syllabus, and outdoor exercises with male cadets. As an Air Force woman officer said, “Differences in training activities don’t stand to any logic since men and women will be performing similar tasks in their units once they are commissioned.”<sup>58</sup> Interestingly only half (50%) of the male officers were in favour of totally integrated training while amongst the other half twenty percent favoured totally segregated training in altogether separate institutions for men and women. As an Army male officer

said, “Segregated training is essential to prevent diversion of young minds from training,”<sup>59</sup> or like an Air Force officer commented, “Some segregation is inevitable on account of biological differences and the need for privacy.”<sup>60</sup> Regardless of gender, all participants interviewed were in favour of separate accommodation to ensure privacy and maintain decorum.

In the given scheme of things at the Service Academies, for women to be regarded more than a token presence and for them to become an intrinsic part of Academy life, certain aspects and issues with regards to their training need to be addressed. These factors have influenced not only the way the overall training is structured and implemented but also the day-to-day interaction of cadets amongst themselves and with their instructors. It is important to consider these factors in the correct perspective keeping in mind the inherent difference between the sexes, the effects of socialization on men and women and the requirements of a given job rather than applying standards across the board.

## **Factors Influencing Integration**

### ***Professional Requirements***

The job requirements and the professional environment of a Service influence training to a very large extent. Such requirements accentuate (like in the case of the Army where strength differences are relevant for the job) or mitigate (in the case of the Air Force where jobs are classified on the basis of skill and where technology plays a vital role) the inherent differences between men and women. During training all the three Services interpret gender integrated training separately/ specifically keeping in mind the particular Service requirements. In the Army these differences are highlighted because the mainstay job requires tremendous physical stamina, aggression, mental tenacity borne by repeated exposure to violence and increasing interaction with troops. In the Navy, sea time has its limitations in terms of confined spaces, lack of privacy in a predominant male environment etc. but none of these differences are related to professional skills or capabilities. They are perceived as issues more out of practical considerations, attitudes and perceptions of both men and women. The Air Force with its defined branches based primarily on skills has least professional integration issues. The basic training syllabus in all the three Academies ergo is

tailored keeping in mind the specific job requirements of the particular Service. The basic training unit too is organized keeping in mind these requirements.

The basic unit for all training activities is a platoon in the Army and a squadron in the Air Force and Navy. To foster a spirit of cohesiveness and healthy competition, cadets are housed as per their platoon/squadron. Platoon commanders/squadron commanders are officers and are responsible for the overall training and evaluation of cadets. They are assisted in their task by Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and NCOs who are instructors for field classes such as Drill, Physical Training (PT) and Weapon Training (WT). From amongst the senior cadets, certain cadets are made Appointments who are like prefects and they too are figures of authority in their own rights for the junior courses. What marks any Army training establishment is its extra rigour, high physical standards and thereof a greater emphasis on physical training. During training, the significant difference between men and women being physical in nature, the Army unlike the Navy and the Air Force segregates men and women at the level of a basic training unit and women are therefore organised by gender in platoons. With the increase in intake of women over the years there are now two women's platoons, which together make a company. The training is thus integrated with the gentleman cadets only at the level of a battalion where women participate and compete in most training activities along with the men. Having a separate Company of women segregates them further from the other cadets and heightens the feeling that women are being meted special treatment. Conversely, women cadets both in the Air Force (ground duty stream) and the Navy are integrated with male cadets at the initial level of a squadron itself and train together in classrooms with only separate physical training standards applicable for men and women. In the flying branch of the Air Force since women are inducted only in Transport and Helicopter stream their training schedule is dissimilar, with men having more flying hours than the women. In the Navy and Air Force, men and women train together on the parade ground too and have common classes for drill. At the Passing Out Parade ceremony, the culmination of all training events, men and women at the Air Force and Naval Academy form mixed contingents while in the Army since the parade is assembled Company wise and women have a separate Company they form a separate contingent. Mixed contingents are a greater sign of integration and the Army here could learn a lesson or two from its sister Services. The Army should

overall integrate the training of men and women cadets at the basic level of a platoon like in the Air Force and Navy. During the interview sessions these were voiced repeatedly by women officers as areas of concern “There should be no separate Platoon or Company of lady cadets, the lady cadets should be part of various Platoons of the GCs Companies itself.”<sup>61</sup> “The drill classes as well as other outdoor classes of the GCs and LCs should be combined.”<sup>62</sup>

### ***Physiological Factors***

The training curriculum per se for men and women in terms of training activities such as drill, classroom subjects and outdoor exercises is almost the same. Differences exist only once physical factors come into play. On an average, men are significantly larger, stronger and more muscular than women. They have higher levels of stamina, endurance and increased aerobic capacity. In comparison, women’s body structure is characterized by less muscle and bone mass and more fat tissues than men. Women also possess substantially less upper torso strength, which makes their arms and shoulders comparatively weaker. These glaring physical differences between men and women have been taken into cognisance while designing the training syllabus with different standards laid down for men and women. Also, due to the above differences, as experience at training Academies has shown, women are more prone to stress fractures, pelvic and leg injuries and most have lower thresholds of pain, as compared to men. Routinely, more women cadets report sick and are given excuse from PT or hospitalised than men do.

### **Physical Efficiency Tests GCs**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
2.4 km run	9 minutes (mins)	9 mins 30 seconds	10 minutes
Chin ups	10	8	6
Sit ups	40	35	30
Toe touches	8	7	6
100m sprint	13 seconds	15 seconds	17 seconds
5m shuttle (1 min)	17	16	15
BPET, 5 km	25 minutes	26 minutes	28 minutes
Vertical rope	4m to pass		
Horizontal rope	Given distance		
Swimming	50m to pass		

As of now the physical differences between men and women are addressed in a very simplistic way during training by having separate standards for men and women. Even with the enforcement of separate standards, few women are able to achieve any high levels of physical fitness. To boot, the differences are exaggerated by the extremely modest standards adopted for women. For example the basic Physical Efficiency Tests for a GC and a woman cadet at the OTA are as shown in the tables below<sup>63</sup>. Only one chance of these tests is afforded and passing these entire tests is at times discretionary for the women cadets.

The following constitute the Physical Efficiency Tests for the women cadets. As is evident that the most difficult test of endurance – the Battle Physical Efficiency Test (BPET), which is a five km run with full pack and rifle in a stipulated time frame is not applicable for women. Other difficult tests such as, chin-ups and toe touches that entail hauling up the body with upper body and arms strength on a beam, to touch the chin and toes to the beam respectively are also not applicable for women cadets.

### **Physical Efficiency Tests Women Cadets**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
2.4 km run	12 mins or less	12'01''–13mins	13'01''–15min
Sit ups	40 or more	39-35	34–30
Standing broad jump	185cm	175cm	160cm
100m sprint	14 seconds	14'01''–16'	16'01''–0'18'
5m shuttle (1min)	17 or more	12 or 16	10 or 11
Swimming	25m to pass		

As it can be observed there is a marked difference in the standards of men and women. For other training exercises too, there is a distinct difference in the standards of men and women – during cross-country runs men cover a distance of up to 14 kilometres while women run only for 5 km. In other route marches too, women cover only half the distance with half the weight as compared to men. They also do not participate in competition such as March and Shoot which involves running a distance of five km with full packs and rifle, crossing a gruelling obstacle course and culminating at the firing range. Otherwise

also, women do not undergo the obstacle course as a mandatory requirement. Boxing, which is compulsory for every gentleman cadet is a sport not even considered for women even if they pit against each other. Even in the informal physical toughening up sessions, most women are just not able to do the very basic and stock exercises at the Academy such as push-ups and front rolls and neither are they pushed to perform like the GCs who are pushed to the limit of their endurance.

As of now the physical standards for women at the Academy are ridiculously low and any physically fit woman from any walk of life who has been exercising regularly can achieve them with ease. As an Army officer posted as an Instructor in OTA correctly commented, “physical fitness standards for women are below acceptable standards and these definitely need to be raised, moreover cadets are just made to pass tests rather than excel. Tougher training needs to be imparted to build up their endurance levels.”<sup>64</sup> Over the years, physical standards have only marginally increased and vis-à-vis men there still exists a scope for great improvement as can be made out from the tables and other details mentioned above. It would be unfair to solely censure women for accepting these low standards because that is all that they are made to do. In all Academies, in every course there are some women for whom passing the above basic tests is an uphill task while there are others whose physical standards are as good as an average male cadet. Till the standards are toughened up to an extent where women as a group are perceived as physically tough, whether fair or not, they will never be judged as equals in the Academy.

The chief difference between men and women at the Academies are physical standards. All the three Services need to revise the physical standards for women cadets. A basic level of fitness should be made a prerequisite for training. Otherwise almost the entire duration of the course is spent in bringing cadets up to an acceptable standard. Also the tests laid down should be mandatory otherwise the whole objective of having tests is redundant. For example at the Naval Academy 12 push ups and 50m of swimming are a part of the PT tests for women cadets. At the AFA too 50m of swimming is a part of mandatory tests. Data collected through interviews has shown that very few women cadets are able to clear these tests. In spite of that they still pass out of the Academy. Either the tests should be realistic or they should be enforced with greater zeal. As a naval officer pointed out, “Unfortunately the physical fitness of lady cadets leaves much to be

desired, there must be strict physical training and PT tests for them since physical strength enhances mental strength as well. There should be no hesitation in failing a lady cadet if she does not perform up to the mark.”<sup>65</sup> Also to affect integration, instead of separate standards, gender normed standards should be adopted. Under gender normed standards scores and requirements are adjusted to accommodate physical differences between men and women. The tests remain the same but gender norming sets different criteria for men and women. All training exercises should be made de rigueur for women. Moreover training should instil in a cadet a penchant for fitness so that throughout his/her career PT and consequently health is not an issue. Physical fitness and the physical standards have clear and mortal relevance to the profession of arms. Therefore no compromise should be made or accepted on this aspect.

It is also recommended that all the Services have their physical standards for women evaluated by outside consultants, including trainers with major sports programs. This is to ensure that female standards correspond accurately to capability and that the present standards are not too soft. The three Services could also compare their standards with those followed by other countries and see how much scope for improvement exists.

### ***Gender Normed Standards***

Rather than having separate tests and standards for women altogether, the differences between men and women can be mitigated by the practice of gender norming as is the practice in the United States and other Armies. Under gender normed standards the tests remain the same and only the scores and requirements are lowered and adjusted to accommodate women. For example in the US Armed Forces if men do 42 push ups then women are made to do 18.<sup>66</sup> The number of sit-ups is the same, since they do not involve any muscles that women lack. The main objective of any standards whether for men or women, or according to age, should be to ensure physical fitness as physiologically determined. The adoption of such a standard, which is physiologically and not politically determined, will result in far greater acceptance of women by their male counterparts.

In an ideal integrated situation men and women should train together in all respects including physical training. This will enable them to perform all tasks equally during training and subsequently in their field of work without



any discrimination. But the vast differences in the prevailing physical standards have shown that under the current circumstances it is inconceivable for idealism and ground realities to connect. In the quest for total equality, if the exercise of similar standards is applied across-the-board the results will be counter-productive. Either most women will not be able to cope with the rigours of physical training and suffer excessive injuries while trying to keep up with the men, or alternatively if the standards are reduced to accommodate women then men will not find training challenging enough. If similar standards are to be applied then women need to train harder and for a longer duration. Tests have shown that with adequate training women can be trained to be as strong as the average man.<sup>67</sup> Towards this a serious commitment is required on the part of the Services to envisage women in all aspects of mainstream Service careers in increasing numbers and roles. Only once women are considered an important resource pool can an investment in their training be made.

Though a hard fact to accept, on an average, women can never be physically as strong as men and can never compete with them as equals in the area of physical activities, therefore a degree of norming will always have to be in place. As of now almost all men believe that training is too easy and soft for women and that men are expected to work much harder than women. As a male cadet echoed the popular sentiment, “Their efforts are like shadows compared to what we are made to undergo, our commission is earned with our hard work while theirs by mere routine”<sup>68</sup>. This conclusion of double standards leads to contempt and a miffed atmosphere in all training establishment. These perceptions help in undermining morale and team-building among cadets, and in particular, between the genders. Male cadets especially seniors also complained that, “If you act tough with the women cadets in the course of their training they feel unduly harassed and often complain in official channels, that is why it is best to keep away from them”<sup>69</sup>. The perceived privileged position of women continues to cause considerable resentment on their presence and the greatest obstacle that the Academies encounter in integrating women are the attitudes of both officers and cadets.

### ***Attitudinal Barriers***

These attitudinal barriers manifest themselves in a number of ways and ensure that women remain at the periphery of Academy life. Women are perceived by a majority of male cadets as intruders in a domain that has traditionally been exclusively all male. This masculine bastion

is mired in many unacknowledged male-centered traditions. Since women's presence cannot be merely wished away, the majority at the Academies have devised rituals to keep them out and excluded from the predominant male culture. For example at the OTA, women cadets are never perceived as equals by majority of their male counterparts. Senior male cadets expressly forbid juniors male cadets to address women cadets in any respectful terms such as 'Ma'am', because of their shorter duration of training, though they themselves are never anything but 'Sirs' from day one. As a senior GC commented, "Though the lady cadets may pass out with us, we will never acknowledge them as our course mates as they do not go through the same privations as us, nor can our juniors ever show or have the same respect for them."<sup>70</sup>

In the Navy, women cadets have to undergo the perceived ignominy of referring to direct entry male cadets as 'Sirs', though they are much junior to them in all respects except for the fact that they have been longer at the Academy since their training duration is for three years. In the Academy hierarchy, it is conceded that these male cadets are senior to the women cadets but the sore point is that since women do not have the option of direct entry training they will always be relegated to their juniors. These may seem like unnecessary and simple platitudes but they go a long way in defining the hierarchy in a training establishment and in a hierarchical institution. All the three Academies should foster an atmosphere where discriminatory and sexist remarks and practices are not tolerated. Towards this a policy could be formulated that acts as a deterrent for any exclusionary practices or any comments critical of military policies regarding integration of women. Moreover, women themselves should not adhere to roles expected from every aspect of training is a challenge and they excel in all training activities. These women cadets are vocal and vociferous about equality in all spheres. For them it is anathema to accept any privileges extended to them on the basis of their gender. "The more they try to show us little considerations, the more they set us apart, just give us the same treatment and opportunities like any other cadets and we will do as well."<sup>71</sup> "What we lack in strength we more than make up for with our will, determination and desire"<sup>72</sup> were common refrains from these motivated women cadets. While there are others who are so bogged down with the mental and physical rigours of training that they would rather the status quo is maintained. Any treatment as 'ladies' does not go amiss with them. "We can't and shouldn't forget that we are ladies and the Academy curricula and milieu should take account

of this first and foremost”<sup>73</sup>. “Seniors and instructors could mind their language and the physical punishments they mete to us, after all we are not GCs”<sup>74</sup>. The high visibility of all women means that the poor performance or negative attitudes of some women cadets reflect upon all women in the Academy. Therefore individual voices and actions rarely shine through at the Academies and the abilities and attitudes of most women are generalized to adhere to the preconceived opinions held. Amongst women cadets, the Academies should enforce the fact that they are no longer just young women but officer trainees. Their mental attitude has to be transformed so that they think and are able to take decisive actions in their capacity as officers. Women cadets need to be put through more mental and physical rigours so that they toughen up to the future requirements of their career choice. A common concern, which emerged during the interviews conducted with their instructors, was the aspect of the low emotional stability of many women cadets, whereby they often break down under pressure or when reprimanded. As an Air Force instructor commented “In the Academy to keep the pressure on cadets one often has to resort to harsh language and tough punishments, a lot of women live up to the notion of being sissies as they start crying and sniveling at the slightest berating they get, such behaviour is hardly soldierly.”<sup>75</sup>

Part of the resentment against women can be attributed to the attitude of senior officers (senior officers are those officers who are in a decision-making capacity in a unit and those who formulate or affect policy changes) who have preconceived and archaic notions about the capabilities of women and their role in the military. It is not so much a gender conflict with them as much as a generation gap. Since there are no policies laid down on gender integration during training or subsequently, it largely remains a reflection of the commander’s personal views on the subject and with every change of command there is a corresponding change in the prevailing attitude. It was observed that by and large senior figures of authority tend to show greater leniency towards women cadets and mete preferential treatment to them. Women being a novel concern and in minority received undue attention, with many senior officers involving themselves in petty day-to-day training activities of the cadets. Except for a few appointments a regular GC may perhaps interact with a general rank officer only during the opening and closing address of his course, while the women cadets are made to hob-nob with senior officers at all tea parties and other social events.

Due to their relatively small numbers, and the inherent curiosity of having women in a non-traditional profession, their activities are under constant scrutiny and even minor achievements or aberrations get unduly highlighted. The women are always on show - not with an element of pride but as the best that has been accomplished under inherent limitations. Women cadets are the cynosure of the Academy, and they outshine at all social events rather than at training events. They are valued more for their social role and token presence rather than for any achievements. Instead of integrating women such actions alienate them even further. Academy life in its very ethos is a spartan existence but when it comes to women cadets' efforts are made to provide them with some creature comforts, in terms of best available accommodation and other amenities. "All living areas have some creature comforts but the women have much more such as ironing boards, washing machines, etc., why not provide the same for us?" questioned a GC.<sup>76</sup>

The attitude of officers and cadets can be attributed to reasons of socialisation, chauvinism or their practical experiences. These attitudes in their manifestations range from friendly, supportive to downright scorn and resentment. For the instructors, whether officers, JCOs or NCOs, the experience is more task oriented and thankfully they are too professional to let personal prejudices creep in. For them a cadet is first and foremost a trainee, with their gender being at such a distance, so as to be inconsequential. Also the professional distance forced by the strict hierarchy of a training establishment ensures that cadets do not take liberties with their instructors. With enough women reaching the required seniority bracket for an instructor, almost all training Academies have women officers posted there as instructors.

As mentioned above, the normal interaction/relationship between instructors and cadets is very formal and hierarchical with an unwritten rigid code of conduct. The main task of initiating green cadets into the rigours of academy life is left to the seniors. The Academy informal sessions conducted by the seniors not only physically toughen a GC but also help him to clear his physical test. They also instil in him a slight fear and regard for authority and obedience. Once a cadet is broken into the ways of Academy life, the same seniors who were earlier terrors now become friends and counsellors. In the Army and the Navy, the duration of training for the women's course being only 24 weeks and 20 weeks respectively, there is no overlap of courses and

consequently women cadets have no women seniors to initiate them into Academy life. A few GCs are given the task, but their interaction being confined to outside the living area, they are not able to delve into the minute details or constantly monitor their progress. Female instructors therefore have to bridge the gap created by the absence of seniors and apart from training they also have the task of counselling and maintaining discipline in the barracks. Male instructors, in all the three training Academies cannot enter the women cadet's living areas unannounced. By the time the announcement is made, cadets have time to clear up whatever mischief they are up to and the whole purpose of checking on them is lost. With no senior women cadets to oversee the problems of junior women cadets, senior officers, who show particular interest in the problems faced by women cadets, insist on women instructors being accessible and adopting counsellor roles. This in turn undermines the image of women instructors as figures of authority since they can be approached for any small problem unlike the equation between the GCs and their instructors, which is fractured by the presence of seniors. As an Army woman instructor said, "There have been innumerable occasions when at odd hours at the behest of the commandant I have had to counsel, advice and motivate women cadets on various issues such as their test results, family problems and other medical problems peculiar to women. The fact that I am approachable for all such problems unlike their other instructors doesn't leave me as much of a figure head."<sup>77</sup>

Once the training duration at the OTA is increased as recommended earlier it will automatically resolve the issue of having women cadets as seniors, as there will be an overlap in-between two courses. Under the watchful eyes of the seniors, women cadets will develop the right orientation towards training. Moreover women instructors will be able to relinquish their role of counsellors to the senior cadets and reclaim their correct position as figures of authority. In the Navy too, the absence of women seniors is greatly felt, but the duration of their training being only 20 weeks, it will be difficult to have any reasonable overlap, until and unless women are considered for a grant of PC and trained accordingly.

### *Discipline Issues*

Good order and discipline is the bedrock of an effective and ready military force. Therefore it is understandable that there can be no compromise on this aspect. The Academy (in a generic sense to include

all the three Service Academies) unlike the world outside has a certain aura of sanctity and decorum that it endeavours to maintain at all costs. Towards this, any undue interaction between men and women cadets that may result in any incident of sexual misconduct and related discipline problems is frowned upon and actively discouraged. In all the three Services for reasons of privacy, discipline and morale, women are housed either in separate barracks or at least separate floors of the same building. Men and women are prohibited from entering each other's barracks or floor under any circumstances. At the OTA, and the Naval Academy, men and women are housed in separate barracks and particularly at the OTA, the women's barrack resembles a mini fortress with gates barring all the entrances. Of course, in this case it is caution carried to the extremes but this has definitely resulted in the occurrence of almost zero discipline related issues. In contrast to the Army and the Navy, the Air Force Academy houses men and women on separate floors/wings of the same block occupied by men. In the initial courses, this led to some cases of sexual misconduct and related discipline issues. Since then the living areas have been separated by a grill that is locked at night. During the earlier courses, it was a common lament by many Air Force officers that since the induction of women began the tenor of the Air Force Academy had begun to resemble a college more than a Service Academy.

Cadets who join the Academy are after all young men and women who are mostly away from their homes for the first time and have little exposure to dealing with life's experiences on their own. A majority of them lack the maturity to understand Service requirements during training. Moreover, unlike in Western countries where society is very liberal towards the interaction of men and women, we are largely a very conservative society still. In the West where a majority of men and women study together in co-ed schools and later work together, segregated training would be an aberration. Conversely in the Indian social context any undue interaction between men and women is always censured and frowned upon and totally integrated training would be a cultural misdemeanour. In the light of this, it is essential to ensure separate living accommodation, but the exercise of 'separate but equal' should remain limited at that. Most men and women cadets personally did comment on encouraging a more healthy interaction amongst them as eventually once they are commissioned they do work together in teams. "More interaction between cadets should be encouraged, as far as possible all classes and lectures should be together, this will also

end furtive attempts by cadets to socialise”<sup>78</sup>; “Its not as if cadets don’t interact informally, during out pass you can see pairs on a date, or the canteen on a Sunday resembles a college more than an Academy and what is so wrong about it anyways?”,<sup>79</sup> were comments by woman officers. The zeal of enforcing ‘virtue’, to prevent the occurrence of any untoward incident has resulted in further segregation of women.

Men and women can benefit and learn from each other if they train together. Women can be exhorted to at least try and match the physical and mental robustness of their male counterparts, while men can learn a lesson or two in sincerity and intellectual pursuits from their female counterparts. Integration can be affected by having maximum training events as common so that the perception of double standards melts away.

The training of women in the Armed Forces is linked to larger issues that reflect throughout the Service career. These involve issues of acceptance, equality, and inherent differences between the sexes, and their effect on national defence. Also, the degree to which women are well trained will affect personnel and unit readiness. Therefore it is imperative to address these issues right from the time of selection and training to ensure that women become an invaluable resource of the Armed Forces.

On completion of basic training, cadets after a ceremonial and elaborate ‘Passing out Parade’ are commissioned as officers and are assigned to particular Branches/Corps on active duty. The profile and responsibilities of officers demand that they work as cohesive members of a team. Certain issues and decisions that affect the total assimilation of women officers in units are highlighted in the following sections.

## **From Margin to Mainstream – Barriers to the Integration of Women Officers**

The Armed Forces constitute an entire way of life and are more than just a career option. They demand a total commitment from its members, who are on duty and call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Armed Forces personnel can be deployed anytime, anywhere, on land, air or sea and when required are asked to make the supreme sacrifice of their lives. Because of its unique requirements, the Armed Forces form a separate entity, are governed by a different set of rules and regulations and have a work culture unlike that of any civilian organization. The Armed Forces in its present structure is a microcosmic society by itself - a select fraternity that has its own special set of traditions, associations and affiliations amongst its members that set it apart from civil society. The Armed Forces are also self-reliant to a large extent and have their own technical and administrative infrastructure and backup to complete their world. To fulfill the goals of the organization and to keep the wheels of such a large establishment turning, all personnel are required to fulfill certain primary and secondary duties and responsibilities. Primary duties relate to the core professional aspect of their work and further the goals of the organization such as flying for pilots, carrying out engineering tasks by engineers, conducting lectures, demonstrations and practices by instructors, administration by administrative officers, etc. While secondary duties are those that aid the functioning and administering of peripherals of such a large organization such as conducting boards for stock taking of weapons, canteen items, fuel oil and lubricants, officer in charge of Services mess, institute, school, hostel, etc.

On completion of basic training, women officers like their male counterparts are assigned to particular Branches/Corps and are posted to their respective units. In certain Branches/Corps they are immediately detailed for further branch specific courses where they learn the professional aspect of their job, while in others they join their new units straight away. Women officers, when they join their units have to quickly adapt to the work culture of the Armed Forces and undertake both primary and secondary responsibilities that are delegated to them.



Feedback from the Service Headquarters, personal observation and interviews reveal that most women officers perform the tasks assigned to them sincerely and efficiently. For example Air Headquarters testified that “more than 90% of women officers are assessed between average to average plus in their Appraisal Reports”<sup>80</sup>. All male officers interviewed commented that the performance of women officers on the job was at par with men, if not better at times. But they also added that their employment was not as flexible as that of men and that their physical availability was greatly limited due to the conflicting demands of their home and children. “Professionally and academically they are as good as their male counterparts, but their employability is limited by domestic constraints that men don’t face”<sup>81</sup>.

The performance or employment of women officers does not pose difficulty to their integration. What needs to be addressed are other perceptible factors such as discriminatory policies and procedures and other imperceptible factors such as attitudinal differences of individual men and women and pre-conceived notions held by them. The first are usually at the organizational level and have to be addressed at the highest level to wrest change. The second are experienced at the day-to-day working level and manifest themselves as informal exclusionary practices and attitudes which breed prejudice in a normal working routine. These normally reflect singular preferences and personal interpretations of official policies. All these factors are inextricably linked and have direct ramifications on each other and the integration and assimilation of women in mainstream service life.

## **Organizational Factors**

There are a number of policies and decisions taken at the highest organizational level that restrict the employability of women officers and are a barrier to their integration. The first and foremost issue that needs to be urgently addressed is the grant of a Short Service Commission (SSC) only to women officers. As of now the Government of India has sanctioned the intake of women officers for ten years only which has been recently extended to fourteen years in all the three Services. Until and unless this policy is reviewed women can never be an integral part of the Services. With such a limited service span women neither have a career in the Armed Forces nor are able to consolidate their position to contribute significantly to national defence. The present policy in vogue is like the sword of Damocles hanging over the career of all women

officers. In the shadow of such a policy, the futility of addressing other integration issues is well perceived. Only when women are employed on equitable terms will there be any meaning in pressing for further opportunities. From its own perspective, perhaps the Government and the Service Headquarters should do a cost-benefit analysis to see the feasibility of investing so much on training for such a short period of retention. This is true for all women officers in all the three Services and is especially relevant for SSC women pilots where the cost and effort of training is more. The experience of almost a decade of service comes to naught when women leave the Services in their prime.

True to the spirit of any organization, Service policies too are geared towards serving their own interests first and relegating individual careers and aspirations to shadowy backgrounds. The Services today, for various reasons, are suffering from an acute and acknowledged shortage of young officers. Since the shortage of officers is being experienced only at the junior levels of Majors and below and their equivalent in other Services, the Armed Forces do not envisage any role for women officers at senior levels in the immediate future. This restrictive bias is reflected in all current policies regarding employability and opportunities offered to women in the Armed Forces. There is slight meaning in asking for more mainstream profiles for women and other career gains when the only seniority they will achieve is the routine rank of a Major in the Army and its equivalent in the other two Services under the current conditions. With a limited service span and the restrictions placed on their role employability, women have a double disadvantage of a prejudicial policy, which even if they overcome, they do not have the relevant experience that is necessary to attain higher ranks. Since women are not employed in any mainstream roles they miss out on important rungs on the ladder of experience, which are crucial for a command. Due to their continuing concentration in junior and middle levels they have no representation at the decision-making levels and are unable to project their point, to make their voices heard or effect any policy changes in their lot.

The issue of women in Armed Forces will remain a non-issue till women are inducted in viable numbers. "The theory of viable numbers originates from what may be called a 'critical mass concept'. Simply put it is a minimum number that would give a group its clear identity, élan and generate a sentiment of esprit de corps".<sup>82</sup> As of now women officers are widely scattered, have no common platform to voice their

concerns and are fighting individual battles for greater opportunities. A woman officer from the first course of the Army who was interviewed echoing the views of a majority of women officers (70% of those interviewed) commented, “women as a group have failed to make a positive impact or to project a cohesive image in the Armed Forces”<sup>83</sup>. Her observation is fairly astute for a variety of reasons that she and other women officers cited - from the average caliber and capabilities of individual women officers; to the limited opportunities and exposure available to all women officers; and most of all because of their almost negligible numbers, which instill no dynamic and characteristic pride of a large group. For women as a group to have a commanding presence, to forcefully project their views and effect change they have to be inducted in sufficient strength.

In all countries where women have a large participation in the nation's Armed Forces they are inducted both as officers and as enlisted personnel. As per present policy in India women are inducted only as commissioned officers. The Service Headquarters state that there is no proposal to induct women in the ranks in the near future<sup>84</sup>. In all interviews conducted and written responses received there was an overwhelming unwillingness (98%) to induct women in the ranks. The major reasons cited for this was, that we are still not ready for such a step because of our social and cultural background and the ensuing conservative mindsets especially at the levels of the troops. Lower levels of education at the enlisted level also ensure that traditional mindsets regarding women and their ‘correct’ place in society continue. “The possibility of inducting women in the ranks as of now is remote, given our social background and traditional mindset the problems posed by women's entry will far outweigh the gains.”<sup>85</sup> Other concerns cited was the lack of infrastructure and the administrative rehash required for such a change. Discipline issues, domestic responsibilities of women and the inherent difficulty of a career in the Armed Forces also figured prominently. Keeping in mind the ground realities of the Armed Forces, one tends to agree with the conclusions drawn from the above observations. Women could be inducted in the ranks once some level of acceptance is generated towards them but under the present circumstances this process could still take many years.

A few proponents of the concept cite the commendable example of the initiative of the CRPF. The CRPF raised its first Mahila Battalion in 1986 followed by a second in 1994.<sup>86</sup> The performance of these

Battalions has been a positive success on the face of it. Parallels of the CRPF experiment cannot be drawn with the Armed Forces, as the requirements and the scale of the two Forces are absolutely different. The CRPF being a small para-military force has only internal security duties to perform. In these too, the women component of the CRPF tackles only the female undesirable elements/agitators. Also in the CRPF women officers exclusively command/head only women companies. The Armed Forces on the other hand have the larger responsibility of defending the territorial integrity of the country against illegitimate intrusion of enemy forces and capturing enemy territory in the event of a war. Towards this their training includes both offensive and defensive operations. Other than protecting national boundaries Armed Forces also have a counter insurgency role and in peacetime contribute in relief and rescue operations during natural calamities. Therefore in the Armed Forces no clear-cut gender lines can be drawn on the fighting front. The utilization of women officers in the Armed Forces, in a counter insurgency role is debatable as firstly women officers would be commanding men since there are no female troops and secondly the gender of the 'enemy' confronted cannot be guaranteed to be female. They could be used selectively in cordon and search operations, etc. where other womenfolk are encountered to minimize cases/claims of human rights abuse at the hands of security forces. Moreover having a separate women/Mahila wing underscores the entire exercise of integrating women in mainstream Service profiles. The logic of 'separate but equal' does not hold much ground in the Armed Forces.

In the present scenario, for women officers to consolidate their position further, first of all the option of a Permanent Commission is to be made available to them. 100% women officers interviewed said that they should be given an option/choice of a Permanent Commission at some point during their tenure. On the other hand only 60% of the male officers interviewed agreed that women should be granted a Permanent Commission. 40% of the male officers vehemently opposed the motion citing reasons of marriage and family responsibilities resulting in a drop in efficiency of women officers with the passing years. In other nations women are employed on more equitable terms, because the utilization of women is dictated by manpower shortages and therefore there is a greater willingness to adjust. Moreover their society is more equitably structured whereby family responsibilities are shared. Once this issue is resolved the Services could then consider reviewing some of its other policies regarding the career graph of women in the Armed Forces.

In terms of career opportunities and exposures, little has changed for women since their induction. The present lot of women officers is only a shade better as a result of few minor policy changes made over the years. Most career courses, including all Arms courses such as the Junior Commanders Course and all combat related courses in the Army, which are mandatory for male officers, remain closed for women. In the Navy and the Air Force too, all courses of long duration and professional augmentation such as Flying Instructors course, Test Pilots course in the Air Force, Navigation and Direction course, Long Gunnery course in the Navy, etc. are closed to women. Due to their limited service bracket and narrow service profile, women officers are excluded from most such courses and this results in their having a limited professional knowledge base. On account of these reasons women are not eligible to compete for other career enhancement courses such as the Staff course which is a combined course for all the three Services and is considered important for promotions and appointments. Most achievements of women officers as on date have more to do with adventure activities and not core professional tasks. "The highlights of my service career were a mountaineering expedition I undertook for which I was awarded a commendation card and a skiing course I underwent, as for the rest of my tenure it was spent doing routine desk work."<sup>87</sup>

Policy decisions restricting the employability of women have a direct bearing on the exposures and learning opportunities available to women. Men in similar specialties even when the job profile and all other service criteria are the same have a distinct advantage due to the higher levels of exposure and involvement provided to them. For example in the Army, in the Army Education Corp, Army Supply Corp and the Army Ordnance Corp there is a large concentration of women. All other things being equal, the work profile of men and women officers in these specialties is almost the same. Yet the most glaring difference in their service graph is that all male young officers on getting commissioned do a compulsory attachment with an Infantry battalion for a period of three years. While women, because of the combat exclusion policy have no possibility of gaining this mainstream experience and are assigned only to routine appointments in their parent Corp. Therefore, though in the same specialty, the level of exposure and experience of men and women officers remains at total variance. Till the time different standards and procedures are applicable for men and women in similar specialties, true integration can never be achieved.

## Occupational Factors

The posting policy of women officers takes into account the spirit behind such exclusions and posts women selectively taking into account the locations of units. The locations of combat and combat support units are classified as being stationed in either 'Peace', 'Field' or 'Operational' areas, based on a number of parameters. These include the physical location of the unit, level of hardship faced, availability of accommodation and operational commitments of units. When the induction of women first started in the early nineties there was a tendency to post women only in peace locations, in fairly large establishments. Because the number of women inducted was relatively small they tended to be concentrated in premier peace locations. A steady increase in their numbers, led to a widening of the locations to where women could be posted. For example in the Army the average course strength of women officers getting commissioned had almost doubled from fifty in 1993 to ninety four in 2001.<sup>88</sup> In the Army, the problem of women's posting was accentuated because of the fewer number of static establishments in comparison to regular Army units whose essential feature is a high level of mobility and an active role. Though majority of women continued to be posted in peace locations, it was no longer an uncommon sight to come across women officers serving in various field areas as well. In such areas again their employability was restricted to support roles only. As a policy that continues to be in vogue, women are not posted to any units in field areas that have an operational commitment or face direct enemy threat.

In the Air Force women officers are more evenly spread, as most Air Force stations are located in peace areas. Moreover since the Air Force has the largest percentage of personnel in support functions in non-combat roles, therefore it is easiest for them to accommodate women within the existing setup. Even when located in remote field areas, a large majority of Air Force stations are family stations due to the large infrastructure that exists to sustain their primary mission of flying. Since an Air Force base is a self sufficient, self-contained unit, there are no dilemmas regarding the posting of women officers due to lack of facilities.

In the Navy, all Naval bases enjoy the privilege of being located in or around large coastal or other cities. Naval bases too, like Air Force stations, have their own necessary permanent administrative and technical infrastructure. Therefore here too there are no disturbing

decisions regarding the shore postings of women officers. Since there are no women aboard ships or in Naval Aviation, as most Navy flying requires being on sea and ships, there are no tricky issues regarding women on sea. Women were assigned to ships on a trial basis, in pairs aboard INS Jyoti and INS Sagardhwani but the practice was discontinued due to a host of reasons including discipline issues. Till the present policy is revised, women will continue to be excluded from offshore tenures.

In all the three Services, whether posted in peace or field, what is more important than the location of the unit, is the job/duties assigned to women in these units. Since women have been a part of the Indian Armed Forces for over ten years now, the initial problems of their acceptance have now been tide over with. The novelty factor has since worn thin and women no longer feel like guinea pigs in this social experiment. This has led to a greater accession of their professional roles. Women officers from the initial courses bore the maximum strain of carving out a professional niche for themselves and successive women courses. Not only did they have to battle preconceived notions about the capabilities of women but also had to deal with traditional mindsets and personal prejudices of men regarding the appropriate roles for women. This often resulted in a greater degree of dissatisfaction and disillusionment for women officers with their environment. "When I was commissioned in the Corp of Engineers women were not posted to Engineer Regiments so for the entire duration of my service I was posted in headquarters and I feel because of this I have missed out on mainstream service experience."<sup>89</sup> With changes being affected slowly and deliberately, later courses of women officers have had to face fewer integration issues and seem to be settling faster in the organizational culture. These women are less likely to be assailed with the feeling that the Armed Forces are just not the right career option for women. Women today are performing a host of duties and shoulder equal responsibilities as many of their male counterparts. In all the three Services women are today posted in most field locations and in all Support Services, where they are performing a variety of tasks from convoy duties, range officers, station security officers and other duties hitherto only tenable by men.

The first tenure of any officer is a great learning experience not only in terms of acquiring professional proficiency but also in terms of imbibing organizational values. This process of preparing an officer to shoulder



all future responsibilities appropriately starts at the most basic level of a unit. A young male officer on being commissioned, depending on the specialty chosen/assigned is posted to his parent unit or a basic operational unit. This is done with a view to facilitate his learning the very fundamentals of his job at the operational level. In a unit he not only receives hands-on training and learns the essentials of his job but also develops a rapport with the men. He is groomed and initiated into the organizational culture and develops strong mentoring relationships in the process, that last throughout his career. All these go a long way in fostering a sense of esprit de corp in him.

In contrast, especially in the earlier courses, a majority of women officers were routinely posted to large static establishments, including Service and Command Headquarters. With the passage of time and an increase in numbers, women officers are now more evenly spread out and are being posted to smaller units as well. In spite of this changing trend, many women in their second tenure or otherwise continue to grace the corridors of various Headquarters. Such tenures are an inconceivable option for any worthy young male officer unless medically down or on some compassionate ground. Posting women in such profiles further alienate and segregate them as they miss out on necessary opportunities to learn, fit into the organizational mould and form any long lasting mentoring relationships. Many women officers (60%) that were interviewed, complained that because of their limited exposure to mainstream Service activities, their level of general awareness about the organization remained very low, as they have had little or no opportunity to serve, interact and learn at the basic unit level. As an Army woman officer commented, “With a masters degree in accounts I was commissioned in a technical Corp, therefore I am mostly unfamiliar and have little clue about the core responsibilities of my parent Corp”<sup>90</sup>. Or like a JAG officer said “Being in such a specialized field even after three-four years of Service, the general level of awareness about Services and its mainstream profile remains very low because of our lack of exposure”<sup>91</sup>. Some women officers in the Navy too find it distressing that they have never served aboard ships, “The primary task of the Navy is sea faring and it is ironic that being in the Navy I have never done a tenure aboard a ship and am therefore unaware of what it entails”<sup>92</sup>.

The more an officer grows in the Service, the more difficult it becomes to integrate him/her in a profile in which the officer has had no prior



experience. With no consistent profile existing for women officers, whence they shunt from headquarters to small units and back in every subsequent tenure, they are unable to gain any relevant experience, this being especially true for the Army. Any middle level assignment in a unit usually requires some previous relevant experience in a similar capacity as a junior officer, experience that most women are not given.

A case in point is of women officers from the earlier courses who were inducted as catering officers in the Army Supply Corp and were posted for their first tenures to Training Centers. Training Centers are large establishments where apart from training recruits and conducting courses they also have a ceremonial role to perform. Given their qualifications most women officers were gainfully employed in the Centers. For their 'Young Officers' course (a professional orientation course) they were made to undergo an abridged version keeping in mind their qualification and the limited role visualized for them at that point of time. Subsequently with no career map planned for them many of these women officers were posted to routine ASC Battalions which are small support units involved in procuring and providing fresh supplies and transport to other units. With previous experience and qualifications that were of little relevance and no course to augment their knowledge these officers were at a total loss in their new assignment. Women officers much junior to them had a better grasp on the functioning of the unit because of their professional training since the later courses were made to undergo the complete Young Officers course and had no specialist qualifications. One of them was eloquent about her perceived ignominy when at her seniority she had to consult her juniors for every small aspect.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly in the Corp of Engineers from 1997 onwards women officers are posted to regular Combat Engineer units, where their utilization is restrictive, since the tasks of Combat Engineers requires them to collocate with frontline troops. In the recent war against terror in Afghanistan, US Combat Engineer troops scaled mountains ten thousand feet high carrying loads of up to a hundred pounds to sanitize the caves suspected of holing terrorists. Under the present circumstances, in the Indian Armed Forces, for women to undertake combat engineer tasks such as described above in the event of hostilities is not only inconceivable but also impossible. For their second tenures as per current policy, women officers who are engineers are posted to

static establishments of the Military Engineer Services that provide infrastructure-engineering support to all the establishments and units of the three Services. This job being thoroughly technical in nature and totally unrelated to combat, women officers once again find themselves learning the ropes of a new job all over again with their previous experience being of little relevance. Male officers in the Corp are assigned to such appointments in a much higher seniority bracket and they are made to undergo an orientation course prior to taking up such positions. The organizational logic offered for this is that firstly there can be no comparison between the service profiles of men and women officers since their terms and conditions for service are totally dissimilar and the role envisaged for them is separate.

Apart from posting women selectively there are certain other drawbacks in the very appointments they are placed in. Sometimes the appointments of women officers do not take into account their higher level of educational and professional qualifications and give them assignments where their full potential is not capitalized. Such officers are severely underutilized and tend to be dissatisfied by their job content. There are women officers in the Navy, who are engineers by profession but are employed as education officers in various headquarters or are made to merely perform routine administrative tasks in units. "I am from the first course of the Air Force and though an Engineer by profession I was commissioned in the Education Branch, throughout my tour of duty I kept applying for a change of Branch but to no avail, obviously I left at the first opportunity."<sup>94</sup> There are women officers who hold masters degree in computer applications but are only made to utilize them to take 'computers for dummies' level classes and at worst perform duties in units that have no information technology orientation at all. "With an MCA degree I was posted in a profile that had no use for my qualification, at the end of my compulsory contractual period I decided to leave as the IT industry was booming and I was flooded with job offers with an unmatched compensation package."<sup>95</sup> In a thoroughly professional organization such lapses should not occur and personnel should be assigned to occupational specialties on the basis of their qualifications and experience.

Another disturbing trend regarding the posting profile of women officers, especially in the Air Force and the Navy is the practice of posting them as staff officers or aides to senior officers. Usually such appointments are made, based on officers meeting stringent qualitative

requirements, a laid down seniority bracket and having a given service profile. Young male officers are almost never considered for such appointments, as they do not meet the above requirements but for women all such requirements are often waived in favour of their gender. These appointments tend to be totally ceremonial and women officers are co-opted only for their show and glamour value rather than any professional competency in handling such roles. The researcher has come across at least three Navy women officers and four Air Force women officers employed in such roles. A cursory look at any Air Force parade or ceremony or pictures/video clippings of the same, will always show a woman officer adorning the backdrop of the frame. Similarly it is not unusual to find women officers routinely employed as liaison officers to visiting senior officers and even their wives! The researcher has observed this so often so as to have lost count of all such occasions. The Army has since taken cognizance of such practices and has issued instructions to put an end to the same. The Air Force and the Navy too could indulge in some in-house clearing and review such appointments.

Not only do such assignments undermine the seriousness of the jobs women perform, they also cause serious attitudinal and adjustment problems for women who have served in such appointments. Constant limelight and hobnobbing with senior officers gives some women a false sense of self-importance, which is reflected in their bearing and manner. Any junior officer adopting such a stance is loathed by all in a strictly hierarchical organization like the Armed Forces. In such cases the fault of not grooming women officers to conform to the organizational culture rests solely with the organization.

The present posting policy regarding women places severe restrictions on their employability, denies them opportunities to learn, does not exploit their full potential and is the cause of considerable resentment against them. 70% of men interviewed feel that women enjoy a cushy career in the Armed forces where they enjoy equal pay and perks without enduring the same hardships and risks that men routinely have to undertake. Their limited posting profile breeds a perception amongst men that most plum peace vacancies in the Army and the Air Force and shore billets in the Navy are taken up by women. This reduces the rotational slots available for men returning from field and offshore tenures.

No matter where women are posted, be it peace or field, headquarter or a small unit, their employability is often at the discretion of the local commanders. Commanders tend to interpret policies based on their own ideas rather than official policies. It was observed that most commanders show an informal preference for male officers and often consider women as liabilities. As an officer commented, “When assigning a man for a duty I don’t have to think about his safety or worry about his administrative arrangements or be ridden with the moral guilt of separating a mother from her child, it is all that much simpler that’s all”.<sup>96</sup> Sometimes some commanders go a step further and directly take up cases to have the posting of women officers cancelled to their units even before the woman officer has reported. Such officers have serious reservations about the capabilities of women officers and their ability to handle the job. When such requests are acceded to they cast serious aspersions on the competence of the officer and are detrimental for her morale and career prospects. Fortuitously the number of such parochial commanders is minuscule and most commanders (95% interviewed) show faith and confidence in the ability of the woman officer under their command and do entrust them with necessary tasks.

In a well-publicized case a Brigadier who was the Sub Area Commander bought more than he had bargained for when he took up a case and got the transfer of a Judge Advocate General’s branch (JAG) woman officer diverted. The woman officer was posted to his headquarters as Officer-in-charge legal cell but the Brigadier, even before the officer had reported had formed an opinion that a lady officer with a child would not be able to discharge her duties efficiently. The woman officer moved a petition in the Delhi High Court and subsequently won, as the bench quashed the transfer order since it violated the constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex. The Bench also gave a meaningful insight on the integration of women when it said that, “Though the Constitutional provision had provided de jure equality to women it had not accelerated de facto equality between man and woman to the extent the Constitution intended”.<sup>97</sup>

Sometimes as a policy and sometimes at the insistence of the commanding officers, the Service Headquarters try and post at least two women officers in the same station/unit. There is little harm in this practice and commanders tend to perceive this as a safeguard against possible safety, harassment, discipline and other related issues. They also harbour notions that female companionship is essential for a woman

officer to have a conducive work environment and to confide in. Women themselves show no such preference for female co-workers or companionship. What irks most women officers is when these actions are taken to an absurd extent and the professional roles of women officers are seen as interchangeable. Often women officers are perceived as a replacement for other women officers who may be away or transferred, regardless of qualification or aptitude, as if gender is a sufficient criterion by itself to perform a given task. A significant number of women therefore would rather prefer to work with men to avoid the petty rivalries, undue comparisons and role transposition with other women. This does not come across as a very surprising choice, as these women have voluntarily chosen to work in a male dominated environment. "I don't want to admit it but I have always resented other women in the unit because of the undue comparisons and clubbing of all our duties as if we were not individuals in our own right."<sup>98</sup> Though most units would feel comfortable having two women officers on their strength, one too many women officers are also considered unsuitable for a unit. As the common perception is that greater the number of women in a unit, greater the number of female problems to be dealt with, such as sickness, pregnancy, motherhood and therefore greater the load on other members of the unit. "Composite Food Labs of the Army Service Corp are the forerunners of women's integration as the only male officer in the unit is the commanding officer!"<sup>99</sup> was a jesting remark made by an officer about a unit that has a primarily female presence.

## **Popular Perceptions**

In units where women are employed on equal terms with men too, nearly 90% of the male officers interviewed felt in varying degree that women officers are accorded special privileges and held to a different standard than men. Most men felt that for the same professional slip-ups women are at the butt of lesser reprisals and harsh language when compared with what they have to face. Most of them felt that women are given all the relatively easier tasks in a unit and are exempt from certain duties, which are perceived to cause inconvenience to them. These frequently include duties at night and other outstation commitments. Women also enjoy other comforts in terms of better accommodation, more privacy, easy access to vehicles and other amenities. As an officer summed it, "Women officers are definitely getting special treatment as compared to their male counterparts. They

are given lighter duties, not sent on temporary duties unless no one else is available and they are not bullshitted like men. If a lady officer can analyze the male psyche of her commanding officer and brother officers, she could have a ball!"<sup>100</sup> "I know of a lady officer who refused to go out at night to check guard duty on the pretext that she was a lady and therefore not safe at night and no one questioned her!"<sup>101</sup> "Women are treated with kid gloves especially by senior officers who treat them as their daughters or reserve special smiles and little privileges for them. They have double standards and avoid giving all difficult tasks to them."<sup>102</sup> "I have seen a lady officer performing adjutant duties coming and going with the commanding officer in his staff car, when you get such treatment there are of course strings attached."<sup>103</sup> Though these observations may not be totally incorrect, personal experience has shown that when a given task is to be executed it is ensured that responsibilities are equally divided- irrespective of gender, because no man or woman is willing to pick up the slack for others. Especially since both enjoy similar benefits in terms of pay and perk.

Generalizations made on the basis of gender can never present a true picture. There are no absolutes such as all men are good soldiers and all women take free rides. Ability is not conditional to gender. Just as some men are hard working while others are lazy, there are some women who work hard while others prefer to take short cuts. 80% of the male officers spoken to, themselves acknowledged the presence of hard working and sincere women in their units who are an asset to the organization. In their own words "In their given career field with the exception of a few, most women are efficient, productive workers and a welcome change"<sup>104</sup>. It is just that the high visibility potential of all women means that the negative approach and inefficient functioning of some women are reflected upon all women. Due to this even minor aberrations and achievements of women get highlighted and form the basis of generalizations and reinforce individual perceptions.

Resentment against women is also generated when men feel that the achievements of women are unduly emphasized. A majority of male officers (70%) felt that women receive disproportionate recognition and praise for their contributions. A woman officer on parade, a pilot flying routine sorties or a woman merely executing her everyday tasks efficiently solicits high level of recognition, - tasks that thousands of men perform and have been performing on routine basis with equal ardour and effect. A woman Air Force officer with two commendations

to her credit was candid enough to admit that hard work and ability were perhaps not the only factors in her felicitation.<sup>105</sup> Gender considerations did affect decisions as she commented on how a male officer in her place, of equal caliber, probably would not have received similar accolades. "I myself and many other women officers I know of have often been pestered to give interviews or figure in documentaries etc. when our only achievement has been merely joining up the Services."<sup>106</sup> Although one appreciates the natural tendencies to focus on the achievements of women working in a non-traditional field, at the same time such an exercise undermines the cause of equality. Emphasizing the achievements of women in such a manner suggests that women have to function under some inherent disadvantage and therefore need to be encouraged. This also alienates women from their peers, as men's hard work is usually taken for granted and often ignored. Merit rather than gender should be the only criteria for bestowing recognition. Only the truly deserving should be considered on a gender-neutral scale.

Women themselves resent the limitations and the limelight imposed on their work. 95% of the women officers interviewed had grave misgivings and felt a sense of frustration at being denied equal opportunities and being constantly derided by men for having softer options. 100% women officers that were spoken to recounted how they had to demonstrate their worth and pass 'tests' before being entrusted with tasks that they had been assigned for. 15% of the women complained that initially, till they had proved themselves they had not been given any independent profile but were made to perform all sundry secondary tasks. "For the first six months of my service I was given no work to do and was merely an understudy to various appointments, it was frustrating and meaningless"<sup>107</sup>. Women also felt that they are held to a higher standard than their male compatriots are. Because of their high visibility their actions are under constant scrutiny and they are always being assessed. Aberrations and absences committed by men are often overlooked while the same are coloured differently for women and are made to bear on all women officers in general. Even though women may be performing the jobs assigned to them with utmost efficiency, yet lingering doubts about their capabilities to handle a situation independently almost always exist and there are greater checks on their activities. Such narrow mindsets are hard to change and many officers are upfront in admitting that in times of grave emergency or peril, commanders would rather rely on a male officer to bring the



situation under control than a woman officer. Even when the area of concern is under the jurisdiction of a woman officer, a male officer is delegated to mandate. "In case of a fire or any other emergency I will send a male officer to bring the situation under control even when the area of incident may already be the responsibility of a lady officer."<sup>108</sup> Such actions undermine the standing of women officers not only in front of their peers but also the men they direct.

To gain acceptance in the predominant male culture of the Armed Forces, women officers apart from proving themselves professionally are also impelled to conform to the prevailing notions of how "lady officers" should behave. Unlike young male officers who are encouraged to be high spirited and zestful, women officers are expected to be sober in their demeanour and dress. This conservative outlook is advocated, so as not to start any undue speculation about their personal lives and habits. In formal social interactions too, women sometimes just don't fit in, as the organizational culture is centered around pastimes perceived as masculine. Therefore in the Air Force, women in certain stations are informally excused from attending 'Rum punch', an organized session with the men. In the Navy, women feel excluded and uncomfortable with the pastimes of other male officers in the wardroom on ships. While in the Army, women are not included in any initiation rituals for young officers, as these largely center around increasing interaction with troops, heavy drinking and some very boisterous socializing. "As I was posted in my Regimental Centre for my first posting, every six months or so I witnessed the initiation of newly commissioned young officers in the mess, a ritual that fostered a sense of belonging and camaraderie albeit with large doses of alcohol! It struck no one that I too was a young officer and should be made part of the ceremonies, for them I was a 'lady officer' and therefore to be treated differently. I just felt very left out somehow."<sup>109</sup> In our social context such exclusions amongst others are more as prudential measures, so that no actions are misconstrued, rather than an inherent wish to keep women out. Our entire social outlook and the prevailing masculine culture has to change before women can find true acceptance in the Armed Forces.

For a professional Army there is no more valuable military resource than its personnel. In optimally utilizing its human resources the Indian Armed Forces have overlooked the capabilities of its women soldiers to a large extent and have ascribed a very limited role to them. To



mitigate this oversight the Indian Armed Forces have to take steps to integrate women in mainstream Service life. Initiating policies that do not limit the career spans and opportunities of women officers would be a right step in this direction. Such policies have to be based on adequate research and trials on every aspect of their employability. Rather than assumptions and notions influencing employability, decisions and facts should. Attitudes and perceptions of both men and women too should change with time and experience, to foster a cohesive work environment based on mutual respect. The synergistic skills of both men and women soldiers are essential for the Indian Armed Forces to function effectively.

Once some of these basic integration issues have been resolved and women gain a certain level of acceptance, as they are here to stay, the Armed Forces could do well to study future roles for women. These include combat functions as the history of women's employment in all nations has shown that once women are inducted in sufficient numbers over a substantial period of time, an impasse on the issue of women in combat arrives sooner or later. The issue of women in combat in the Indian context, though still in the realm of concepts is elaborated in the following section.

## Combat Exclusion and Women in the Indian Armed Forces

*“How can a man die better than  
Facing fearful odds  
For the ashes of his father  
And the temples of his Gods.”*

– Lord Macaulay

This glorified spectre of a masculine world order exhorting men to fight and sacrifice exemplifies the very essence of the Armed Forces. The primary aim and responsibility of a nation's Armed Forces is to protect the territorial integrity and geographical boundaries from external aggression at costs far exceeding the purely material. The entire philosophy and force structure of the Armed Forces is therefore geared towards combat necessitated by such threat perceptions and the need to establish supremacy by force and military might. Towards this they constantly prepare for the time when they have to fight and win wars. War faring, contending hostilities and literally measuring fire therefore remain central to the existence of any Armed Forces. Their operations include both offensive and defensive operations. In a more secondary role the Armed Forces are also invoked to counter insurgency in strife torn areas and are relied upon to provide assistance in relief and rescue operations during calamities.

In most countries that have formally accepted women in their Defence Forces, women are excluded from the primary mission of combat. In India too such exclusions are strictly adhered too and mandated by policy. The reasons and rationale for this exclusion vary from historical, as there is little precedence for including women in combat, to physiological, as patently women are less strong than men. From psychological, as society believes that innate emotional differences exist between the sexes, to the economic and other costs of providing separate infrastructure and facilities for women. Apart from these, there are a host of other related reasons cited to continue with the present trend. Since combat is more a state or a situation than a mere concept, in order to exclude women from combat it is important to define what combat is.

## Combat Definitions

Jeff M Tuten in his essay *The Argument Against Female Combatants* gives three components of combat that have traditionally governed the exclusion of women. These components are valid across time and geographical boundaries and continue to form the basis for exclusion of women from combat. The first of these components is *function*, since a combatant's duty or function involves direct action designed to kill or capture members of an opposing enemy force. The second and third components are specific to Combat Support Specialties. Apart from combatants on the battlefield there are a host of other troops providing combat support functions who share all the hardships and dangers of the combatants since they are intermingled with them and as the old adage goes 'every soldier an emergency rifleman'. Therefore though women do form part of most Combat Support Services the other two components of the combat definitions that is *collocation* with those engaged in active combat and the associated *level* of danger exclude them from actual battle.<sup>110</sup>

Through the ages the nature of combat and consequently combat definitions have kept evolving and changing. In earlier times, battlefields and fronts were limited and the weapon systems were simple with a visible reach. All soldiers were combatants and actively fought on the front. With the passage of time, growing technical innovations led to weapon systems becoming increasingly sophisticated with a capacity to choose and reach destinations. Battle lines blurred from formal boundaries on the map to one's own backyard. With growing complexities the structure of the fighting forces too evolved on thoroughly professional lines with roles and career fields within the Services clearly demarcated. Combat therefore emerged as a highly specialized skill.

Present day direct ground combat definitions excluding women highlight three main aspects. "Direct ground combat is *engaging an enemy* on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being *exposed to hostile fire* and to a high probability of *direct physical contact* with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, manoeuvre, or shock effect".<sup>111</sup> The Australian Defence Forces define Direct Combat Duties as: "Duties requiring a person to commit, or participate directly in the commission of an act of violence against an armed adversary; and exposing a person

to a high probability of direct physical contact with an armed adversary”.<sup>112</sup>

The cogency of such exclusions when made on the basis of above definitions is highly questionable, as these definitions do not take into account the changing nature of warfare or the fast pace of technological innovations and their application in defence. Combat zones today defy parameters as technology has increased the reach and power of weapon systems. Modern war is a 360-degree war, as frontlines become fluid and unpredictable, encompassing entire territories. Soldiers on the battlefield are no longer the only ones threatened by war. Soldiers in the rear, as well as entire national territories are now within the reach of long-range artillery, combat aircrafts and missiles with powerful radii and sophisticated launch platforms. For example during the Gulf war, Saddam Hussein's Scud missile offensive killed more American soldiers including eleven women soldiers than traditional close combat battle. “It is certainly true that one is equally dead whether killed by a scud falling on a rear area barracks or by an enemy soldier firing point blank”.<sup>113</sup> Therefore though women may be excluded from offensive operations, a combat exclusion policy does not realistically exclude women from lethal combat zones. Attacking support systems, lines of communication and supplies are acknowledged tactics, therefore support personnel must be as battle ready and trained as the soldiers on the front.

In the Indian context, one can only conjecture the role of women in the event of war, as India has fought no major war since the induction of women officers began. Moreover the strength of women officers being negligible in the Indian Forces, even if war were to break out most women may well never see the killing fields. The limited engagement in Kargil is not a case in point as it was confined to a limited area; a short duration and the entire Armed Forces of the nation were not mobilized. A negligible number of women officers who happened to be posted to units involved in the limited engagement did perform various support tasks such as pilots ferrying supplies or Army women performing tasks in Engineer, Supply and Ordnance units, but no woman formed a part of any frontline troops with a direct task of engaging the enemy in combat. The formal exclusion of women from combat arms also obviates the Armed Forces from making any thorny and compelling decisions on the role of women in the event of war. Since women are only commissioned in Support Arms and Services their absence from

combat functions is a forgone conclusion. The role and utilization of women officers in the Indian Armed Forces both in times of peace and mobilisation is left to and decided by their profile in their parent Corp.

### **Combat Functions vs. Support Functions**

The employment and participation of women in a given Service i.e. Army, Navy and Air Force, is dictated to a large extent by the operational requirements of the Service. Since combat assignments in all three Services are currently barred for women, women are employed only in support functions. The 'tail to teeth' ratio of a Service has direct bearing on the number of positions that can be opened to women under the shadow of combat exclusion. This ratio refers to the number of support personnel 'the tail' required to maintain and sustain the actual fighting forces 'the teeth' of any Defence Forces. For example in the Air Force, flying forms the nucleus of Service mission, yet flying involves only a very small portion of active duty personnel and that too only officers in the Indian Air Force. A great deal of technological and human effort is involved in preparing for the mission but a select few pilots wage the actual battle. The bulk of Air Force personnel are employed in providing support functions to the flying elite. Therefore in the Air Force proportionally much larger number of assignments/positions can be opened for women. In contrast in the Army and the Navy, firstly combat arms lead in numerical strength and secondly deployment for the Army or duty at sea for the Navy affects the entire population of personnel and not just a select few. Besides in the Air Force and the Navy since technology plays a greater role it is therefore easier to automate. This leads to technology and technical skills scoring over physical strength - the greatest reason cited for keeping women from combat jobs. Since the fighting arms of the Army still rely considerably on brute physical strength to get most tasks accomplished there is a greater reluctance to open such combat specialties to women.

With the growing complexities of today's warfare tactics and technology, professional armies (in a generic sense to include all three Services) have evolved into large-scale formations. In this highly skill-oriented environment, the performance of Combat Arms depends heavily on the massive Combat Support Services and Systems in place. Combat Support assignments can be broadly defined as those, which provide operational support in terms of logistics, supplies, technical, communications, intelligence and administrative support to Combat

Arms. These softer logistics elements are essential to maintain the fighting forces for prolonged periods in battle and therefore are of increasing importance in the battlefield. These support services in the present non-linear battlefield scenario have a direct bearing on the overall combat potential because of the resurgence of the role of operational logistics. Women in most Armed Forces are concentrated in these support functions. In the Indian Armed Forces women are exclusively inducted in Support Arms and Services.

Support functions have traditionally been valued less than combat jobs since combat functions contribute directly to the primary mission and combat personnel face the highest risk of attrition. The unspoken hierarchy of combat functions is validated by the higher status, pay and allowances and greater opportunities for career advancement that combat personnel enjoy. The path to command and senior ranks in all the three Services also charts its way through the central mission of the Armed Forces, which is combat. Since most women perform support roles their work is valued less and they are not accorded equal status or opportunities in the Armed Forces. In the Indian Armed Forces even if the terms and conditions of service for women were to be made equitable with men, without any frontline experience women can never compete for senior positions on par with their male counterparts.

## **Combat Exclusions**

“Combat is the sole *raison d’être* of the profession of arms”.<sup>114</sup> There is no denying the fact that to be an integral part of the profession of arms, combat experience is essential. For women to move from peripheral functions to core/mainstream service pursuits and to rise to any position of authority in the Services hierarchy, combat options have to be considered. The issue has many complex strands and conflicting points of view, which have to be resolved before any conclusions can be arrived at. These range from the potential impact of such a resolution on national security to concerns about equal opportunities and individual aspirations; from the tough physical requirements of combat assignments and whether women can meet the same; to the effect of the presence of women on unit cohesion and morale. Instead of getting mired in an emotional debate over such exclusions it is more important to analyse the basis/reasons for the same and determine the best way forward.

The opposition to women in combat roles arises from a belief that national security will be compromised since women are not as strong and aggressive as men. Also their presence is seen as undermining unit cohesion, morale and unravelling the tenuous thread of male bonding. "Current policies placing women in or near close combat units must be re-evaluated - not in terms of career opportunities, but in terms of military strength and readiness. Lives must not be sacrificed, nor missions undermined, because of front-line soldiers who are less strong, less deployable, and more vulnerable to wartime violence and capture".<sup>115</sup> This forceful statement made by Elaine Donnelly of the Centre for Military Readiness sums up the sentiments of those contending combat roles for women. The inherent limitation of such a stance is that it rests on the basis of certain assumptions and generalizations - cultural and practical. Amongst others, these centre on notions that all men are strong and aggressive while all women are weak and passive or that all men possess equal strength. The validity of strength as the sole criterion for all combat functions and if the same have been mitigated to some extent by technology still remains to be explored.

In the Indian context, the entire debate of opening combat specialties to women is a little premature as women are yet to find a stronghold or receive equal opportunities even in support functions. As there is no practical knowledge gleaned on the subject from lack of experience, studies or trials, the debate on women in combat in the Indian context remains restricted to the realms of theory. The issue is really a non-issue from the organizational point of view since in the present measured utilisation of women combat duties are not an option even in the distant future. Moreover since the issue is not justified by military necessity there is little heed paid to the entire debate. Demographically India does not face any manpower shortages rather conversely it is reeling under its population pressure and rife unemployment. Due to this, there is little pressing reason for the conservatives to reconsider the present policy and customs. But in the interest of fairness, if women have been inducted then they deserve the same opportunities for career advancement as men without any dilutions in standards to accommodate them.

During the interview sessions 35% of male officers felt that the possibility of women serving in combat arms could be explored or at least given a try selectively. The rest 65% did not visualize any role for women in combat arms.

“Frankly speaking, I don’t think our ladies can serve in combat arms, under the best of circumstances it is a difficult enough job for a man, for most women it might prove to be impossible”.<sup>116</sup>

“Being a combat soldier I know what I am talking about, most women that I have come across in the Forces would not be able to live up to the requirements of combat”.<sup>117</sup>

“The possibility of women serving in combat arms is remote, our troops will just not accept them as leaders and most of the women I have come across in the Forces will just not be able to live up to the demands of combat.”<sup>118</sup>

“At present the situation is not conducive for women to serve in combat arms, the challenges of forward areas, lack of required infrastructure, slow pace of modernization of the armed forces, etc. combine to keep women away.”<sup>119</sup>

“I feel combat arms should be left to the stronger sex i.e. men - plain and simple.”<sup>120</sup>

“There is no requirement to induct women in combat arms so why rustle a hornet’s nest?”<sup>121</sup>

Amongst those in favour, all cited certain preconditions and reservations given the present context:

“Mental tempering and physical toughness are essential for combat profiles, if women can improve on these they can be inducted in combat arms”.<sup>122</sup>

“Women can be considered for combat duties provided our social and cultural barriers fade away in due course of time, women show the physical resilience and emotional stability of a combat soldier and an overall requisite environment can be created to accommodate them”.<sup>123</sup>

“Women in the Air Force are already pilots, depending upon their performance, they can be given a chance to join the fighter stream as well. However the selection criteria must be as stringent as for men.”<sup>124</sup>

Some officers felt that women could be gainfully utilised in combat arms to fulfil administrative vacancies in a unit such as Adjutant and Quartermaster to free male officers for the real business of fighting.



Some also advocated that women in a younger age profile say from twenty years of age to twenty-five be posted in pairs to such units.

“If at all women are inducted in combat arms then they should be recruited at twenty years of age and they may serve till twenty five or so and that too only those who are in top physical shape to undertake the rigours of combat.”<sup>125</sup>

“If women are physically and mentally capable they should be allowed in combat units where they can be gainfully utilised as Adjutant, Quartermaster, etc.”<sup>126</sup>

Amongst women themselves there were divided opinions on the subject with 60% favouring the motion of women serving in combat arms. Their responses too were conditional with all women admitting to certain inherent limitations.

“Women can serve in combat arms if the requisite training is imparted, under the present circumstances this process could take a long time to achieve”.<sup>127</sup>

“If men change their traditional attitudes and learn to see women as equals, with women themselves being motivated and capable, there is no reason why women cannot serve in combat specialities”.<sup>128</sup>

While the other women interviewed, based on their beliefs and experiences, saw little possibility of women serving in such specialties.

“Rhetoric apart given the current ground realities, let’s face it neither are women up to the demands of combat and nor do men want them there”.<sup>129</sup>

“There are just too many limitations to be dealt with, if women were to serve in combat Arms - from battling attitudes and mindsets to acquiring the necessary physical levels, administrative requirements and family compulsions, the list is just too long and complicated”.<sup>130</sup>

“I do not envisage any role for women in combat arms. Given the kind of job requirement even a lot of men are not up to it, forget women. Also once married domestic duties will only hamper the deployability of women.”<sup>131</sup>

All opinions and beliefs on the subject are influenced by certain factors that play a decisive role in determining the extent of women’s

employability in the Armed Forces. These factors were referred to repeatedly by both men and women officers interviewed in the context of combat exclusions and therefore need to be analysed in more detail.

## **Physiological Factors**

There is no denying the fact that physiologically women are weaker than men. Enough studies have shown how women have only approximately 50%-70% of the strength, stamina and muscle mass of the average male. Women lack comparable upper body strength and have lower heart and lung capacities leading to lower aerobic capacities. They also have a lower centre of gravity, higher fat to muscle ratio and lighter bones. Due to these limitations, women face a higher degree of difficulty in carrying loads, route marches, running and other field exercises - activities that are essential for combat functions. Consequently women need more time to accomplish all these tasks, have to work harder and therefore are prone to early fatigue.

But it is also true and tests have shown that with adequate training most women can substantially increase their physical strength and be as strong as the average male. Such studies have been criticized because they did not include men under the same experimental conditions thus making any comparisons ineffectual. Or others dismissed the results with caustic remarks that women “were in other words, now as strong as the Army’s weakest males”<sup>132</sup>. In such cases, the point is being lost in emotional rhetoric, since the idea is not to make women as strong as men or to compete with them but merely to get a given job done. The degree or quotient of strength required to perform a given job can be achieved by women who are motivated and trained to do so. Women athletes, weight lifters and martial arts exponents definitely possess more strength and stamina than an average male.

The physical requirements stated by themselves should also be realistic and geared towards the strength requirement necessary for getting a particular task done. For example a woman mountaineer may have the stamina, will and tenacity to climb the highest peak but may perhaps fail simple mandatory tests for men in the Armed Forces that require upper body strength like chin-ups and toe touches. Physical tests therefore should have a direct bearing on the type of job required to be performed. Towards this the Services should identify occupational specialties where certain physical qualifications are required and apply the same on a gender-neutral standard.

Prior levels of sports and physical activity also affect lack of physical fitness of most women entering the Armed Forces. It is further a misconception that all men possess equal strength and all men in fighting arms are Rambo's personified. Strength and stamina are qualities that have to be determined on an individual basis. They are not gender specific but depend on individual capabilities. Not all men are fit for combat duties and some women are.

For women to be integrated in Combat Arms, it is a foregone conclusion that it will always be the domain of a select few. Under the present circumstances, given the level of physical fitness and the mental make up of most women officers in the Indian Armed Forces it will be difficult for many to meet the stringent physical standards and mental stress of Combat Arms. The time and cost of ascertaining the few women who would be able to meet the standards, unlike how the critics make it sound, would be negligible, as the initial short-listing could be done at the training stage itself and further screening be carried out in the units or during other basic orientation courses such as the Young Officers training. In this regard the Navy and the Air Force should find it easier to integrate women in all specialties and appear to be more female-friendly forces. In the Navy the lack of infrastructure necessary to accommodate women aboard certain class of ships and submarines is a problem that needs to be tackled on a long-term basis. Other than that, the high level of automation in these Services makes for strength to be criteria in only a few of the specialties such as marine commandos. Since women are already flying combat aircrafts and are aboard combat vessels in other countries like the USA, Canada, Denmark, Australia and UK, there is little reason for these exclusions in India.

Technology is also touted as a great leveller of physical differences. Modern weapons have equalized the killing fields to some extent, with recent wars such as the Gulf war showing the use of smart weapon systems. Mechanical power too has replaced muscular power in many areas especially transportation and equipment. Yet in a third world country like India 'future wars' are yet to arrive and most traditional war tasks require strength, speed, power and endurance. For example during the Kargil conflict capturing heights up to 18,000 feet while carrying loads up to 100 pounds, with a well entrenched enemy on top were tasks requiring tremendous stamina and courage. In the ultimate test, things have changed little for the Indian foot soldier as well, "Hundreds of years of technological and tactical advancements haven't

made a dent in lightening the load that is the bane of every infantryman's existence. Like Roman foot soldiers 2,000 years before them American infantrymen hump about 80 pounds of gear. Today's soldier has to be a pack mule with computer skills"<sup>133</sup>.

Another aspect of physiological differences between men and women is the uniquely female physical condition of pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing. Women are perceived to lose too much time and attention from their tour of duty due to pregnancy and related responsibilities. Once a woman is pregnant, apart from her maternity leave it is obvious that she cannot be assigned all tasks, especially those tasks that require physical effort or long periods in the field and detachments away from the base. This poses challenges for commanders who have to prepare contingency plans and reassign personnel to make up for the shortfall. This is particularly true for women pilots who are grounded from the time they conceive. A simple solution to this problem was offered by a female pilot herself stating that pregnant women pilots should be assigned to ground duty tenures at the time of such occurrence. In this manner they will not be held on the flying strength of a unit, thereby inflating figures on paper while actually creating a shortfall.

Exclusions should take into account the following truths about child bearing and rearing before defining parameters. In today's progressive world small families are the norm and therefore most women are pregnant for a very small portion of their life and there are some women in the Services who never do become pregnant at all. When pregnant, it is just another medical condition that renders one temporarily unfit and women do regain and resume prior levels of fitness and work. Once a child is born, child-rearing responsibilities are often shared, thanks to strong family ties and the relatively easy availability of domestic help unlike the situation in the West. In the civilian workplace too, women have been managing stressful jobs with long hours along with their domestic duties. Furthermore the responsibility of children and bringing them up rests equally with the father. Therefore the fact that women can become pregnant is hardly a valid reason to preclude women from combat assignments.

Of course one cannot discount the possibility that some women may deliberately use pregnancy as an excuse to shirk from combat assignments. Not only will such machinations cause last minute manpower shortages but will also breed resentment against women.

The immature actions of a few are liable to bring a bad name to all women in Service because of the high visibility factor of women and their actions. For example the US Navy supply ship *Acadia* deployed during the Gulf War lost 36 of its 360 crew to pregnancy and had to fly its pregnant crewmembers back to shore.<sup>134</sup> These ships were acrimoniously referred to as 'Love Boats'. Such actions undercut and trivialize the seriousness of life and death concerns of war and make a strong case to keep women out on account of irresponsible actions such as these.

Some women even use their menstrual period as an excuse to get out of unpleasant tasks and exercises. They often succeed in such contrivance because most men are ignorant about the facts of menstruation or are too embarrassed to discuss them. Apart from the initial discomfort that some women may experience, there is nothing that stops a woman from the conduct of routine tasks during her period. The only real problems that women may face in field situations is the lack of privacy and inconvenience which can be overcome with some prior proper planning and the use of extra absorbent shields. Another cause for concern is the change of behaviour that may be onset by menstruation. To arrive at any valid conclusions, the effects of such changes should be explored in conjunction with the cyclic patterns of the male body clock that too offsets certain physiological and psychological changes. Till then there is enough reason to encourage the deployment of women. As an Air Force Captain deployed in the Gulf War humorously put it, "U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney was going to send over five thousand more Marines to reinforce the desert frontlines, but he decided to send over five hundred women with pre-menstrual stress instead. Cheney rightly figured the women would retain water better and shoot anything that moved".<sup>135</sup>

## **Psychological Factors**

Apart from physiology there are certain psychological differences cited between men and women that are perceived to render women unsuitable for combat. The exclusion of women from combat is justified on the grounds that they lack the fighting spirit and aggressiveness needed to win wars. Maintaining the truth of a statement based on such a sweeping generalization will have to give lie to all historic records available of women in combat actions. In war, self-preservation is a natural instinct of all soldiers male or female, like a Gulf War veteran military

policewoman said, “If it happens while I’m sitting here, and it’s a question of me or them, it’s going to be them.”<sup>136</sup> Therefore, whether aggressive behaviour is circumstantial, promoted by social conditioning and tradition or determined by biology is at best a highly contentious issue. No woman can deny the subtle or overt conditioning she receives to conform to the female ideal of a passive, nurturing and submissive individual. On the other hand there is explicit evidence that aggressiveness is directly influenced by the level of the male hormone testosterone. In between the two somewhere lies the neutrality of the desire for combative tasks - an individual bid. The effects of training too cannot be discounted as both men and women can be trained to exhibit aggressive behaviour.

More than hormones or strength, combat is a mind game. It is not a male or female attitude but it takes a particular personality type or a given temperament to live on the edge of danger. “Some women do need to be in the services. Just like there are some men who are totally unsuited to the military, some women are perfect. They thrive on the structure, the discipline, if you will. They need a challenge and maybe a safe and controlled outlet for aggression. It’s not a gender thing. It is simply that all humans can not be typecast. On the whole, the service treats its men and women equally. You succeed or fail in meeting the demands. It’s not to do with gender as much as competence, tenacity and toughness”.<sup>137</sup>

## **Unit Cohesion**

Soldiers in combat situations share a unique emotional bond as they battle with ultimate life and death concerns. The concept of ‘brothers in arms’ is zealously fostered in all combat units and is the intangible basis of cohesiveness in a unit. Unit cohesion is an invisible thread that ties soldiers together in extreme and dangerous situations. Often many more lives have been lost in retrieving a single soldier than to give lie to this bond. “Numberless soldiers have died, more or less willingly, not for country or honour, or religious faith or for any other abstract good, but because they realized that by fleeing their posts and rescuing themselves, they would expose their companions to greater danger. Such loyalty to the group is the essence of fighting morale”.<sup>138</sup>

The presence of women is perceived to disrupt this essential process of bonding that is the core of unit cohesion by those opposed to the idea of inducting women in combat units. Unit bonding and cohesion

is perceived by such men to be under threat by women as their presence raises questions about the masculinity of the profession of Arms. Further, in most interactions between men and women, men tend to be protective towards women and the nature of love/romance between men and women often leads to irrational emotions and actions that could corrode bonding in a unit. They decry that women will mar the morale of the men who take pride in the masculinity of their profession. “The introduction of women into a masculine environment tends to destroy intangibles associated with the Army. Men have traditionally sought to idealistically fight for peace, home and family. They want to protect women, not compete with them. The soldier’s world has traditionally been a masculine haven. His masculinity is his façade. Women who enter his masculine world threaten his manhood”<sup>139</sup>. In India, since women form a negligible part of the Armed Forces and are restricted to the peripheries they are not viewed as usurpers of a male legacy. Their compatriots relegate them to a minority status by claims of picking up the slack and the privileged position enjoyed by women. Senior leadership for lack of working with women as peers and traditional mindsets most often reflect a patronizing/protective attitude.

Male officers also tend to believe, that given the rural background of our troops and lower levels of education, the men would find it difficult to accept women as leaders. Reality is far from this, personal experience and data gathered through interviews reveals that men in the ranks show little hesitation in accepting women as leaders. The strict chain of command and the strong values inculcated during training and their Service ensure that they measure officers by their rank and not by their gender. As a woman officer interviewed commented, “Maybe an initial hesitation exists, but once you prove your efficiency and tolerate no laxities, you are as much a figure of authority, vested with the same powers as the next officer and command equal respect and loyalty”<sup>140</sup>.

Another widely held belief is that men tend to treat women differently from men and are more protective and considerate towards them. Such an attitude is considered detrimental in a combat environment where soldiers may be distracted from the primary mission of combat by a need to protect women soldiers. This attitude is the result of socialization of men and women and holds true only in a scenario in which women willingly acquiesce to play the role of damsels in distress. In career fields where women demand equal roles without discriminations or privileges, they are as competitive and aggressive as men. A very

inspiring statement during the Gulf War made by Lieutenant Lyonnal Bifora of the XVII Air Borne Corps of the United States Army sums up the feelings of most professional women soldiers, "Once you work with them enough, they realize you are a soldier like they are. I won't let them carry gear for me, I like to tell them that a bullet has no gender. You can kill the chivalry bit, you can be tough and strong and still be a female". Men too realize this soon enough and are unwilling to share additional burden whether a man's or a woman's. Some men are against the very presence of women in the Armed Forces and tend to display antagonistic behaviour. Such personal prejudices have no place in a professional organization and these individuals will have to unlearn such behaviour or at least keep their views to themselves. They have to learn to view team-mates as individuals and not classify them in narrow gender categories.

Unit cohesion and morale are also affected by concerns regarding a certain chemistry between men and women. The risk of impropriety of romantic liaisons, sexual misconduct and jealousies has to be taken into account in any close interaction between men and women since these will always exist. Under the present circumstances in the Indian Armed Forces in Support Arms and Services the effect of the presence of women on unit cohesiveness has been negligible. "The presence of women in no way undermines a unit's cohesiveness or effectiveness",<sup>141</sup> were constant refrains during the interviews conducted. "The presence of women has no adverse impact on the unit, whenever romance occurs and ends in marriage it has happened quietly without affecting the cohesiveness of the unit, of course in our social and cultural context relationships without formal commitments are not encouraged and actively frowned upon and if they happen they lead to isolation and reprimands for individuals".<sup>142</sup> "Women have no negative effect on a unit's cohesiveness in general but there have been stray incidents that have caused embarrassment to the organisation."<sup>143</sup> Some young officers felt otherwise and simply stated, "Bonding in a unit without women is better",<sup>144</sup> or that "Sometimes men vie for women's attention and in the process they pit against each other which destroys a unit's bonding."<sup>145</sup> All women officers interviewed felt that their presence had little or no impact on the cohesiveness of their unit and most cited a sense of belonging. As a JAG branch woman officer commented, "The legal cell is like a small family and we work very well as a team, I have always felt acceptance in the Services."<sup>146</sup> As experience of the last decade has shown that in a task-oriented environment such tensions



between men and women, in the first place are minimum and secondly both men and women officers are responsible enough, so as not to let such occurrences come in the way of accomplishing tasks on priority. Given time and experience, prompted by a strong organizational culture and positive leadership, men and women can learn to work together in teams without letting gender interactions come in their way.

## **The Ultimate Nightmare**

“A woman POW is the ultimate nightmare”<sup>147</sup>, was the comment by a senior American officer during the Gulf war when two women soldiers, Army specialist Melissa Rathbun- Nealy and Major Rhonda L Cornum were known to be taken as prisoners of war. Their capture and the death of thirteen other servicewomen during the 1991 Gulf war shattered the myth that society at large would not accept the idea of women prisoners of war or the death of women in combat. More recently in 2003, Shoshana Johnson and Jessica Lynch were taken captive by the Iraqis and later released. Their capture sparked a huge debate about the realities of women going to war.

POW's, irrespective of gender are liable to be humiliated and abused sexually or otherwise but women because of obvious differences are perceived to be at greater risks during war and capture. The threat of rape and sexual violence is perceived to be of a greater degree against women POWs as torture in interrogation and otherwise. Women are seen as having fewer chances than men when captured to defend themselves and to withstand the rigours of captivity. Interestingly women are perceived as being more vulnerable to oppression and brutality by societies at large, but only at the hands of other nationalities. Women in all societies are seen as embodiments of national honour therefore rape and sexual violence towards them have often been used as strategic weapons of war by invading forces. Since women's sexuality is seen as being under the protection of the men of the community, its defilement is perceived as an act of domination and asserting power. Therefore though male prisoners too are sexually abused and tortured as the recent Abu Gharib scandal in 2004 showed, it does not elicit the same response and outrage as the abuse of women POWs. It emasculates entire national identities whence women instead of men are put to the risk of capture by the enemy to protect national territories/interests. To close entire career fields to women to uphold some archaic unsubstantiated notions of national honour and because women are

perceived to be the weaker sex and therefore need to be protected is not conducive to the morale of the Services.

The loss of a son, husband, father or brother is considered no less, if not more than the loss of a daughter, wife, mother or sister. The outrage and national anger on the torture and mutilation of Lieutenant Saurabh Kalia during the Kargil conflict or the cold-blooded murder of Squadron Leader Ajay Ahuja was unparalleled as was their loss to the country. Since the Armed Forces are a voluntary service, men and women who volunteer for the same willingly and consciously accept the risk of death or the possibility of capture, rape and torture. This is an informed choice that they make in full knowledge of the associated professional hazards and it is accepted in a similar spirit. Major Rhonda Cornum admitted to having been raped whilst a POW in Iraq but still maintains that female soldiers must accept the risk as 'part of the job', as she would again. Asked by Larry King whether she felt she was treated differently when she was a POW in the 1991 Gulf War, Army Col Rhonda Cornum said, "I don't really think so. You know, everybody was abused in one way or another."<sup>148</sup>

As experience has shown, combat exclusion policies cannot protect women from becoming casualties. In modern warfare frontlines are fluid and boundaries far from clear-cut. Support troops are as vulnerable to death and capture, as are frontline troops and therefore the difficulties of keeping women away from actual battle. Women die performing their duties just as men do. In the Indian Armed Forces at-least three women have lost their lives while performing their duties. The first Army woman became a casualty in a freak training accident on a firing range whilst the second, an Air Force transport pilot lost her life when the aircraft crashed due to a technical snag. The third again an Air force pilot became a fatality in an attempt to avert a drowning accident. The sacrifice of these brave women reinforces the commitment of women to partake equal risks and responsibilities in the nation's defence. The Services on their part can ensure that men and women receive the same prisoner of war training and therefore have equal chances of survival.

## **The Way Ahead**

In the debate about assigning combat roles to women, both sides have strong arguments to substantiate their claims. Neither can military effectiveness be compromised nor can individuals be denied

opportunities on the basis of their gender. Amongst women too there are some who are highly motivated and desire equal participation in the Armed Forces while there are others who are content with their limited charter and do not visualize a combat role for themselves. Since women themselves are divided on the issue perhaps the only option is to permit women who meet the criteria and volunteer to be assigned for combat positions. Though in the interest of fairness this is a choice that is not extended to men as men can volunteer for combat but they can also be assigned to it. Therefore if women are allowed to volunteer then they should also be within the purview of mandatory deployment. If choices are allowed to be exercised across the board in the name of equality, then Armed Forces are very likely to turn defunct especially in the event of war. Since a majority does not favour the idea of women in combat roles and very few women would be able to meet the stringent requirements of Combat Arms it is best to allow only those women who volunteer. Men and women have almost never stood on equal platform and this complex experimental platform is hardly the place to start.

Rhetoric apart, the only real way forward is to try a given model rather than reject it on the mere basis of assumptions. Physical and psychological tests and field experience will reveal who makes a better soldier than dismissing an entire pool of human resources just because they do not belong to the right gender. All emotional debates about women and combat will be laid to rest when the issue, under fair parameters is tested on ground. In India, a decade is a sufficient time-frame to overcome the 'growing pains' of inducting women and settling the dust. Keeping pace with more progressive nations and reinforcing its commitment to equality, India too should hold trials and studies and see how it can best utilize its womanpower and create opportunities for an elite band of professional women combat soldiers in all the three Services.

Countries like Canada and Britain have been conducting such studies and trials on a non-discriminatory basis in the last few years. In Canada women were recruited for the Combat Arms Training Program for 16 weeks, in which the volunteers were put in standard infantry training along with male recruits with no adaptations made for strength or any other differences. The results were predictable when 45 out of 48 women failed to make the grade. The male failure rate was thirty percent.<sup>149</sup> In Britain the Combat Effectiveness Gender Study report too found that

fewer than two percent of servicewomen are as fit as the average serviceman and therefore the ban on women serving in combat roles should continue.<sup>150</sup> Without challenging the flaws of the tests or the reliability of statistics, the evidence supports the argument that on principle even if one woman can match the physical capabilities of men then she should be allowed to serve in combat units. In India when such trials are conducted this should be the guiding principle behind tests that should be realistic and fair.

Combat exclusions on the face of it are merely some occupation fields that are closed to women. A closer look would reveal many hidden agendas including the need to preserve the last bastion of manhood by some and the desire for equality in all spheres by others. The demands of national security and military effectiveness cannot be swayed by attitudes and assumptions and have to be firmly grounded in actualities. Combat assignments should be the preserve of ability and not gender. All specialities should be open on a gender-neutral standard to those who are qualified, capable and competent to undertake them. Towards this, tests and trials should be instituted with no hint of double standards or any other privilege/discrimination.

## **The Flip Side Story**

### **– Military Women and the Stress Factor**

The majority of research and studies on the subject of women in the Armed Forces primarily focus on the issue from an organisational point of view. The effect that the presence of women have on the Military and consequently operational preparedness is assessed and analysed in popular literature and formal studies from every possible perspective - social, physical, psychological and the practical. In the midst of the entire clamour the only voices and experiences that remain unheard are those of the Military-women themselves. The difficulties and obstructions that women experience in adapting to a predominant male work environment and culture remain largely unexamined. The experiences of Servicewomen show that a whole host of issues and policies regarding the employment of women largely ignore the effect of the same on the careers and aspirations of the women themselves. Women in Armed Forces face certain difficulties in their careers, which are gender specific, and over and above the normal stress and strain of Military service.

The profession of arms by its very nature is stressful. Armed Forces routinely require their personnel to deploy and move at short notices, under difficult and hostile conditions with minimum comforts, often at the risk of ultimate life and death struggles for its combat troops. Such prolonged deployments with an uncertainty factor results in long separations from home and family, which has to be borne stoically and philosophically. A Military career demands total commitment from its personnel - men and women, twenty-four hours, day after day, whence all other duties and obligations must become secondary. Apart from such perceptible hardships, there are certain imperceptible pressures of a career with the Armed Forces as unlike the democratic set-up of most civilian organisations the Military organisation follows a strict command structure in the given hierarchy. Within such a set-up individuals are given only limited spheres of control and may exercise professional choices only as dictated by the needs of the Services. The organisational culture too at large demands the surrendering of all personal statements of freedom, thought and identity and pressurises 'good' officers and men to conform. Be it a matter of dress, hairstyle or larger professional issues, adherence to certain set procedures is

demanding of all individuals. The ensuing environment can at times become restrictive and restraining and therefore the importance of fitting the mould is emphasised, so that such encompassing adherence appears as a matter of natural choice.

Women in the Armed Forces, besides the inherent difficulties of a Service career have to battle certain other stresses specific to their sex. These include overcoming the effects of discriminatory policies and service conditions, limited career opportunities, surviving attitudes and at times harassment in a predominantly male culture. Also to be tackled are questions of identities, the pull of marriage, family and domestic responsibilities. Working under the shadow of so many external constraints exercises a serious stress on Military-women and a large majority of them feel a lack of organisational support and often cite a disillusionment factor. Regrets stated included, "The Armed Forces are not ready or prepared to have women in their rank and file, I feel I have gained little from my time in the Services";<sup>151</sup> or "There are scant opportunities and no support for women to continue in the Services, consequently I feel little sense of achievement or belonging"<sup>152</sup>. "There is a general absence of confidence in the abilities of women to perform at par with men and this lays great pressure on women to prove themselves to gain acceptance."<sup>153</sup> "In the Services as a woman I feel the constant necessity to demonstrate and establish my worth to be accepted"<sup>154</sup>, was a constant and common grievance of all women officers interviewed. Women officers are often accused of displaying low emotional stability and a tendency to break down under pressure. This in almost all situations is not because of the pressure of work or work related stress but a feeling of harassment and lack of support from colleagues/superiors and other extraneous factors over which they have little or no control. As women officers interviewed acknowledged, "I admit there have been occasions where I have just broken down and wept not because I could not handle the pressure of work but because I felt harassed by my Commanding Officer who would not grant me leave but keep postponing it on one pretext or the other."<sup>155</sup> "I remember being reduced to tears when one of my colleagues filled the boss's ears against me, who without bothering to verify facts accused me of being incompetent."<sup>156</sup> "Sometimes I think on some days my PMS just gets the better of me"<sup>157</sup>, remarked a woman officer humorously on being questioned about her emotional stability at the work place.

## Exclusionary Policies and Prejudices

It is a common mantra of good management that people work efficiently when they have future goals and prospects to work towards. A transparent, unbiased system of growth with associated powers and advancement opportunities are incentives for peak performances. Within the Indian Armed Forces, as Air Commodore S M Hundiwala in his article *Women in the Indian Armed Forces – Problems and Prospects* rightly explains, “Lack of individual challenge confronts a vast majority of Servicewomen who find themselves in a ‘Catch-22’ situation of being a non-combatant (therefore of professionally subordinate status), and often without responsibility commensurate with rank, position and seniority – the three most acknowledged tools of authority in the Armed Forces”.<sup>158</sup>

Since women are assigned only to support branches/Corps in the three Services, the majority of profiles to which women are designated tend to be routine and uninspiring desk jobs. The thrill and adventure associated with a career in the Armed Forces remains an unfulfilled aspiration for most. Most (70%) women interviewed spoke of the Services not matching with their expectations, in terms that their work profiles were not challenging enough. For every woman officer who cited a sense of achievement and fulfilment there were a greater majority who cite a disillusionment factor by Service policies and their jobs per se. “For my first posting I was posted to a MES (Military Engineering Service) unit, which is a two-third civilian organization, I shared my office with two ‘paan’ (beetle leaf) chewing civilians and my job was to push files from nine to five. I was convinced I hadn’t joined the Forces for this.”<sup>159</sup> Almost all (80%) women officers spoken to also commented on luck being a major factor in their assignment to a unit and the particular set of people there. Some women officers appeared to be luckier than others and were assigned to units to which their qualification profile matched and the unit itself had a more active role as well as commanding officers that displayed greater confidence in their abilities. For example a woman officer from the Air Force said, “Compared to my course mates I feel I have been lucky, my boss never underestimates me, entrusts me with equal responsibility and has faith in my abilities”.<sup>160</sup> Such women adapted faster to the organisational culture and had little feelings of being discriminated against in day-to-day work environs. Often because of being in the right appointments and with correct timing or because of superiors that take care of their

interests, certain women officers stated that they were luckier than others even to be detailed for certain career enhancement courses. On the other hand there were women officers who had not been detailed for a single professional course in their entire career. In a professional organisation all personnel should have equal and systematic access to career advancement opportunities rather than abstracts such as luck determining their career graph.

Apart from limiting career opportunities, exclusion from combat arms for women as a policy, also results in loss of financial benefits and seriously limits their promotions, posting profiles and their numbers in the Services. Women loose out on pecuniary gains as combatants enjoy certain allowances based on their skills, career fields and assignments. These allowances include Difficult Area Allowance, High Altitude and Uncongenial Climate Allowance, Siachen Allowance, Hazard and Special Hazard Pay, Snow and Avalanche Pay, Parachute Pay, Special Commando Pay and certain other allowances. A ceiling on their promotions because of limited short service tenure and a combat exclusion policy also means a ceiling in the grade of their pay scales.

A limited Service tenure that is not extendable beyond fourteen years has overall critical ramifications for women. Faced with a dead end in their Service career in their early thirties and further unemployed, women officers have little choice but to either resign themselves to their domestic responsibilities or to struggle all over again in a highly competitive environment to re-establish themselves in a new career field. To have no options to continue in the Armed Forces after giving the organisation the best years of one's life is a highly stressful experience and often leads to periods of grave depression. As women officers commented "In my mid thirties I am suddenly confronted with a loss of job, I have two children so we miss the extra cash as well, on certain days I just feel very frustrated."<sup>161</sup> "In the first seven years I gave my best to the organisation, now with nothing to look forward to I tend to be casual and really don't care much about my performance."<sup>162</sup> Women officers once they complete their tour of duty have to cope with a sudden loss of status, occupation and remuneration all in one sweep. At the end of their short service tenure women officers are not eligible for any pensioners' benefits either and thus loose out on economic gains as well.

A not so obvious fallout of a restricted Service tenure is also that the path to senior positions and all accompanying privileges remains closed



to women. Women officers throughout their tenure with the Services remain young officers - the work horses of the Force and must leave before their efforts bear fruits. Since all officers and ranks begin their Military career at the lowest rung of the Service ladder, all soldiers must undergo similar rigours through various stages of their career and rise within the hierarchy. Young officers are therefore entrusted with the majority of field tasks to be executed on ground and are reckoned to learn things the hard way. They must bear all adversities like true soldiers and pay little heed to personal comforts and individual wants - to become future leaders and senior commanders. Whether in peacetime or during operational commitments the spirit behind grooming junior leaders remains unchanged. Gradual progression within the Services leads to positions of authority and the accompanying power and sphere of influence. In an organisation where every one passes through the same milieu, privileges tend to be top heavy. Women in the Indian Armed Forces because of their limited service bracket endure all the struggles of the learning years without any future possibilities of a command or senior positions in the hierarchy and the ensuing power and benefits. The perception that women in the Services are a privileged lot is a hollow assertion in the light of the overall picture. Women in fact are denied systematic access to earn any privileges, which men take for granted in the routine course of their careers.

## **Dilemmas of Identity and Associations**

Apart from exclusions from core Service activities that are mandated by policies, women officers are also marginal to the male dominated masculine culture of the Services. Because of being relegated to the periphery of this male dominated arena and simultaneous disassociation with their own gender on account of a non-traditional career choice, women officers often face dilemmas of identity. "Their ascribed status (sex) conflicts with their achieved status (occupation), thus creating confusion of social identity because society defines soldiering as a male vocation".<sup>163</sup> Women in their endeavour of securing credence in this predominant male set-up, disinherit themselves from traditional female roles. Yet no matter how hard they try they are never really accepted as 'one of the boys'. This leaves their moorings asunder as they are not really a part of any social group. The question of women officers identity in the larger social context are perplexing, since being women (in a biological sense) they are seen as rejecting feminine values and

identifying with traditionally what are viewed as masculine roles and values. Society at large admires and is yet hard on women who do not fit popular expectations.

For the women themselves, these questions are less ambiguous, as they move away from conditioned responses and enjoy the unabashed power and adrenaline trip of being in the Armed Forces. Uncertainties about identity come up more in social interactions instead of the professional, where male officers at times tend to perceive and treat women officers as ladies rather than as officers. Some women too take advantage of these privileges especially if they are married to fellow officers. They show little regard for service hierarchy and other social customs, whence they decide to be ladies for the evening or on holidays! As an Air Force male officer commented, "Some women tend to take undue advantage of their gender for example when there is an official party in the mess and the prescribed dress is a mess-dress, a lady officer who is married to another officer in the same station tends to come dressed in civil clothes like a sari, etc. as if she is attending the party as Mrs Somebody and not as an officer herself."<sup>164</sup> Many women interviewed (nearly 30%) made statements where they want their status as 'ladies' acknowledged "Treat us as officers but do not forget that we are ladies"<sup>165</sup> or "In social gatherings I should be treated as a lady"<sup>166</sup>. The same women officers when treated exactly like other ladies, that is like other officers' wives and are asked to attend ladies club, participate in wives welfare associations, etc., show serious hesitation and qualms in being associated with the same. To want to have the best of both worlds without real allegiance to any can only create confusions for all concerned. Being an officer is not a matter of convenience, or a status that can be adjusted to live up to social expectations of 'correct' behaviour of a given gender. To end all such conflicts, Service Headquarters should once and for all clarify issues regarding the social and professional standing of women officers. Once there is a policy on the matter there will be little way for individual interpretations and choice.

In the order of the Armed Forces, women officers are a marginal identity. Therefore to belong and succeed in this masculine world order or at least to get the best out of what the system has to offer, women officers soon learn the importance of conforming. Within the given constraints of policy decisions and traditional attitudes regarding correct roles and behaviours for women, women officers must find their niche. Their

achievements must be within what the organisation deems as a fit role for them. By being vocal about their dissatisfaction with their limited Service role and clamouring for change in their own limited sphere, individuals merely worsen their every day situation. Dissenting notes are never taken well in the Armed Forces and are dismissed as 'growing pains'. Individuals who do not conform are soon no longer in the running as they are sidetracked with great subtlety by affecting difficult transfers or just being ignored at various levels. Therefore one comes across a large number of women officers who have realised the futility of fighting the system and have reconciled themselves to roles and appointments that they were earlier hesitant to undertake. Since women as a group have no formal common platform where they may share and project their grievances, most women soon realise that as individuals an intelligent choice is to adhere. By themselves women are no harbingers of change as they are numerically at a disadvantage and do not occupy any senior position of authority to be able to introduce any positive change.

In this process of adaptation to the predominant culture, the yardsticks of acceptance are the existing masculine standards and values. These standards deign that 'Lady' Officers, as officers give their unconditional best to further the goals of the organisation while still retaining their lady-like demeanour in their behaviour and personal life. Observation has shown that women may have been granted equality in terms of status, rank and pay, yet they are never considered equal enough to exercise choices in their personal life that may be at variance with the popular notions of correct behaviour. In her working life a woman officer is expected to be capable, confident and result-oriented while in her social life the aggressive stance of an independent woman, free to make her own choices of clothes, partners and social activities is frowned upon. Since conforming to these standards leads to acceptance and is rewarded, most women officers adhere to these expected norms and downplay conflicting roles and desires. Women officers who have independent views and style of functioning, thus failing to live up to the standard are categorised as black sheep and no matter what their subsequent achievements, remain outsiders. Consequently women smoking or drinking, which are perceived as male habits are frowned upon and actively discouraged. Such unnecessary issues, which are a matter of individual choice rather than gender, at times assume ugly proportions and become causes for stress. As a woman officer narrated, "It was so ridiculous I was actually counselled by the Adjutant and

given a moral lecture by the Commanding Officer for drinking beer in a mess function since they did not think it was an appropriate thing for a lady officer to do.”<sup>167</sup> In such a restricted environment, women officers also have to be guarded in their social interaction with their male peers so as not to cause undue speculation about their personal lives. “In my spare time I’d rather keep to myself as being seen too much in the company of any male officer will only make me the butt of gossip.”<sup>168</sup> Rumours about relationships and romantic liaison often lead to counselling or berating.

In this process of gaining acceptance by conforming to male values and standards, women also on the basis of the same standards tend to disassociate themselves from other women. They tend to evaluate other women by these male standards and out of their own volition they consider themselves different and consciously distance themselves from other women. Karen O Dunivin, in her essay ‘Adapting to a Man’s World: United States Air Force Female Officers’, describes these reservations rather well, “They recognised and accepted that they were not men, but had to work in an androcentric culture that fostered masculine attitudes and behaviours. So the women did not view themselves as typical women; instead, they saw themselves as the classic “exception” and distanced themselves from other women, internalizing a masculine prescribed identity”<sup>169</sup>. Under the given circumstances in the Indian Armed Forces, though never implicit, since women officers do not want to reinforce the stereotypical notion that women almost never get along with each other, most women tend to view new entrants in their domain as competition. Many women interviewed made passing references to the problems they were facing with other women officers in their unit and accused them of insubordination. “There is little or no cohesiveness amongst women officers in most units, there is an understated animosity as women officers view each other as competition”.<sup>170</sup> This is mainly because being so few in numbers, many women have had the privilege of being the only woman officer in their unit and are therefore wary of and unwilling to share their hitherto exclusive domain of work and living space. The newcomers too instead of adhering to existing hierarchy of Service seniority and norms like other young officers often transgress these channels to form their own networks and associations with other male officers.

The problem is aggravated by the attitude of other officers, who feel that women officers need to be constantly chaperoned by each other

and start clubbing their duties and even accommodation even when no shortage exists. This is gravely resented by women who in their respective domains have so far been managing just fine on their own. Undue comparisons and a belief that the role employability of women officers is interchangeable merely on the basis of their gender give most women a feeling that they were best alone. A senior officer I spoke to narrated very smugly how he had overcome the problem of having a woman officer posted to his division by asking the authorities to post two women instead of one, and by coordinating all their duties and movements including leave together.<sup>171</sup> Such patronizing attitudes and the refusal to treat women as mature and responsible individuals places extra stress on women officers and in their interaction with each other.

Another issue that causes heated debates and flurries amongst women officers themselves and with other male officers is the issue of women's uniforms. The issue is often discussed and contended upon with little consensus being reached. The matter should take into account first and foremost uniformity, practicality and convenience to do a given job. Social considerations and how it looks could follow later. Once decided there should be no ambiguity or leeway for personal preferences of commanders or individual officers. For example during the training stage all cadets wear shorts compulsorily as part of their PT rig. On being commissioned and joining their units most women are actively discouraged from wearing shorts, the normal rig for all other officers, the reason being cited that it will create an unfavourable impression on the men. Yet there are other units and commanders who prefer a consistent standard for men and women and insist that women wear shorts. Such confusing demands that vary from unit to unit leave women frustrated and confused about what a standard rig is. Within women themselves, some women have conservative views or tendencies to put on weight and do not like to wear shorts while there are other serious athletic types who find trousers confining.

A second issue of dress that had women divided and has since been clarified by the respective headquarters was the issue of wearing saris in lieu of trousers, as some women had taken to wearing saris as a matter of choice. During pregnancy all the three Services permit women to wear saris in lieu of trousers, but apart from that the Army and the Air Force do not permit women to wear saris as part of their working uniform and have issued recent clarifications in this regard. The Navy

on the other hand issued a recent letter giving women the option to wear saris in lieu of trousers with dress no 8A. Women in the Navy also have the option of wearing a skirt as an equivalent of shorts as part of their working dress. The only concession extended to women when in skirts is that they are excused from running. Personally and also the opinion voiced by many women officers echoes that permitting women to wear saris as part of uniform unless warranted by a medical condition merely highlights gender differences. Moreover since saris restrict and hamper mobility they are hardly the most appropriate rig for any Service officer of any branch. For formal social occasions trousers are not a necessity and though equivalent dress for women has been clarified, certain units insist that women wear shirt and tie or lounge suits, especially when regimental ties are specified, thus making women look more like little men. An equivalent dress could be thought out and specified for women as shirt and trousers/lounge suit are not part of standard wardrobe of most women. The issue of jewellery and make up also needs to be clarified and widely publicised so there is no room for personal interpretations. Towards the issue of women's uniforms the three Service Headquarters would do well to poll the opinion of all women officers and then constitute a common advisory board to finalise the issue.

## **Sexual Tensions**

In military service, due to the very nature of the job that involves close living and working quarters between men and women, sometimes away from families and in an environment totally dominated by men, it is natural and inevitable that in the interaction between men and women certain sexual tensions will creep up. As long as it is mutual, consensual and does not pose challenges to good order and military discipline it should remain a private affair. Such issues become complicated and corrode the morale and cohesiveness of a unit when such attention is unsolicited and takes the form of harassment or emerges as scandals involving sexual jealousies or affairs between officers already committed or married. Women officers who are caught in any situation, which has a whiff of scandal involved, have to endure the stress of malicious gossip in the dominant masculine culture of the Armed Forces. Women usually emerge losers as they are most often than not held responsible for conduct unbecoming of a lady. Men are more easily excused such misdemeanours as it is assumed that men are more prone to look for a little adventure now and then. A woman officer was candid

enough to admit that when her affair turned sour she was at the receiving end of great censure, “When things inadvertently became public I had many people pointing fingers on my conduct. What amazed me was that the male officer involved got away without anyone casting any aspersions on him. I was very disturbed by the unfairness of it all.”<sup>172</sup>

The Indian Armed Forces have had their share of sexual jinx, scandals and harassment related complaints. But a strong organisational culture and a zero tolerance policy ensures that all charges of harassment are taken very seriously and dealt with swiftly with offenders being punished appropriately. Almost all the women officers I spoke too did not cite sexual harassment as being a worrying factor, even though women were serving in a traditionally male environment and were a minority. “I’ve had some of my colleagues who were senior to me and married behave in a way that was not totally officious but my no nonsense demeanour was enough to put them off, I don’t think I ever felt harassed by their behaviour.”<sup>173</sup> Four women did narrate incidents where they were at the receiving end of unwanted and unwarranted attention. Two incidents related to misbehaviour by fellow officers including a senior officer, while the other two incidents involved ‘jawans’ or men, one being under the influence of alcohol and the other a planned act. All four women complained in the official channel and sought organisational recourse to initiate disciplinary proceedings against the offenders. They were all satisfied with the prompt investigation of their cases, with the disciplinary procedures initiated including a court martial and the punishment meted out to the offenders<sup>174</sup>. Other women narrated cases that had taken place with other women officers that they had heard of or witnessed but all maintained that justice was done and that sexual harassment is not a problematic issue in the Armed Forces.

Though formal regulations exist to deal against sexual harassment, as a preventive measure the Services could conduct training programs, capsules and workshops to teach men and women how to identify and prevent sexual harassment and widely publicize procedures and guidelines. The aim behind these exercises should be to sensitise men and women to the issues of sexual harassment and discrimination and familiarize them with military regulations against the same. In the Navy, at the Centre for Leadership and Behavioural Studies based at Cochin, as part of the course content are three classes on gender sensitisation that highlight codes of conduct and impart an awareness of laws. There



is also a draft Navy order on sexual harassment that defines sexual harassment, identifies what could constitute unwelcome behaviour, gives out the chain of command and lists out punishments. In the Army and the Air Force if similar provisions exist they are yet to reach a wider audience and make their impact felt as a palpable and well-known policy as all male and women officers interviewed were unaware of the existence of the same. It would be prudent to familiarise people with such day-to-day issues and prevent their very occurrence rather than to get involved in prolonged and formal legal procedures later.

## **Marriage and Family Considerations**

The demands of a Service career with its prolonged and unstructured hours of duty, frequent travel and outstation temporary duties, where often only the most basic amenities are catered for and routine transfers make combining military life along with the responsibilities of marriage and family a highly stressful experience for women officers. No documented evidence is required to highlight a reality all around us where women are made principally responsible for most housework and the rearing of children. By virtue of being women and in a traditional society like ours, women officers in most situations have to almost singly bear the burden of domestic work and childcare. Most male officers interviewed espoused conservative views such as, “A woman’s first priority should be her home and children”<sup>175</sup>; and they outright condemned talk of equality and career aspirations of women as ‘western’ ideas and influences. “There is no escaping the household responsibilities for a woman in our context, she has to be extremely lucky to have an understanding and cooperative husband and then things may be slightly better for her.”<sup>176</sup> Consequently they were chivalrous enough to concede that it was okay to show considerations to women officers with children. Accepting such concessions, in the larger framework is not beneficial for women officers and subverts their cause. Apart from the day-to-day difficulties of juggling all around responsibilities, women have to constantly battle the stereotype that their commitment towards their job and the Military is lesser than that of most men especially once they commit themselves to marriage. For example a male officer I interviewed made a candid comment, “Women make fine officers as long as they are single, they lose fifty percent of their efficiency the day they get married, another twenty five percent when they have children and are thereafter a handicap for any unit”<sup>177</sup>. Such generalised statements do not portend well for the cause of women,



as for every woman officer who is unable to strike a balance between work and family there are women who are not excused any duties and undertake and perform all the tasks that are in their purview along with their other responsibilities. "Professionally I have not been excused any duties on account of my being a mother, the only concession that has been extended to me is that occasionally I am allowed to miss a party or social event because of my baby's requirements."<sup>178</sup> Or as another woman officer said, "There have been many occasions when I was the duty officer and I have left my baby in the middle of the night with the maid to go and check guard duties. Considering the extra responsibility that I have as a mother I feel I could have been excused such duties but I never put forth such requests."<sup>179</sup>

For women to strike this delicate balance between work and family considerations is a difficult ball game. Unlike a man a woman's job is never over even once she returns home and therefore she has to work twice as hard. The arrival of children further aggravates the stress situation for women officers. Torn between their professional and domestic responsibilities most women officers feel that they are doing justice to none. The Services have their own distinctive requirements, which are hardly compatible with motherhood. The most taxing being posted to non-family stations and being separated from their children, difficulties are also encountered when women officers as part of their job are routinely detailed for temporary duties away from their home station. In many cases there is no getting away from such duties as the primary profile of the unit involves operating from detachments such as in most helicopter units of the Air Force. Or in other units where officers are frequently required to tour in their given area of jurisdiction such as officers of the Judge Advocate Branch or officers posted to Composite Food Laboratories in the Army Service Corp. Women officers who have children and are posted in such units when interviewed had comments such as, "As a mother things are difficult – one is unable to give one's best to the profession and fulfil one's commitment towards one's child at the same time"<sup>180</sup>. Or "Your heart is no longer in your work, when you are constantly worried about your child back home"<sup>181</sup>. Even at their own duty station, with a small child attending early morning PT parades or doing overnight or late night duties proves to be difficult. The Services have no childcare plans or crèches in any stations and officers have to solely depend on domestic help or the kindness of neighbours, family and friends. Within the Services the attitude and expectations of individual officers on how,

when and where a task should be done rather than its completion further makes life difficult for parents. Commanders on their part do have a point, as they often feel grossly handicapped by having pregnant women and young mothers (therefore un-deployable) on their hands. This problem can be mitigated when commanding officers and other unit officers are made familiar with and exhibit knowledge of the regulation and restrictions accompanying such a condition. Moreover a creative duty roster in consultation with all concerned could help tide over this temporary situation.

It is ironic that the same organisation that lays such immense stress on a stable family life in terms of marriage and children for a male officer does not extend the same support for a stable life to its women officers. For the career progression of a male officer it is very important that he is married as many appointments are made on the basis of such requirements. Moreover it is important that the wife fits into the Services mould and furthers the career aspirations of her husband by going along with the popular culture of 'lady wives' and their pastimes. The system also depends on this traditional family structure to keep the home front operational at all times and feels free to deploy its personnel at short notices to far flung locations without even once pausing to consider the demands of the same on military families. In India where marriage is such a strong institution and with there being no official concept of single parents, the Indian Armed Forces, unlike the United States Armed Forces do not have to have official military regulations where military parents have to show contingency plans for child care at all times. It is assumed that Service wives will shoulder all domestic requirements under all circumstances.

Women officers on the other hand find little organisational support where a conflict between career and family responsibilities can be avoided. Their marriage and subsequent family is seen as an impediment as it opens a Pandora's Box of issues for commanders. From posting with spouse, to childcare responsibilities that restrict movement, to increased and coordinated leave requirements, the list just unfurls. As a matter of coincidence or design, a military career is incompatible with most civilian careers, as observation shows that a vast majority of women officers are married to fellow officers mostly in the same Service and at times inter Services. This gives rise to the unique situations in which dual Service couples find themselves as both have similar professional commitments and moral allegiance to their jobs. To have

some semblance of a normal family life, one of the two is forced to make certain professional trade-offs. These include requests for postings with spouse even in appointments that may not be career enhancing or refusing courses leading to specialisations that may result in prolonged separations from family. At times women officers just find it so much simpler to leave. As an Army woman officer said, "After my short service tenure I decided to quit since it was proving difficult to manage postings all the time with my husband who is an Army dentist"<sup>182</sup>. Or as a woman officer in the Air Force commented, "When my husband who is an Air force pilot got a posting abroad I decided to quit so that me and my children could join him during his tenure as I only had two years left on my extended tenure"<sup>183</sup>. Other voices echoed similar sentiments, "Since I am married to a civilian who is based in a metro and I cannot get a posting there the only option left for me is to leave on completion of my tour of duty."<sup>184</sup> Or as a male Air Force officer put it, "Even though my wife and me had got a posting to the same station only a few months back when I cleared the Test Pilots exam I decided to go for this career enhancing course to Bangalore as collocation with my wife who is an Army officer is a perennial problem and not a one time issue".<sup>185</sup> In almost all cases women are expected to, and do place their careers as subordinate to their spouse. They routinely adjust their postings and career moves according to their husband's career profile and graph. This remains an un-stated surmise and unquestioned sacrifice with women being only short service commission officers whose terms must end at the end of five years or during their extended tenure, thus their careers are not expected to take them far as it is. The same Air Force officer commented, "I have never moved an application to be posted with my wife as such requests can adversely affect my career graph, since my wife is a SSC officer she only has a job and not a career in the Services so it is ok for her to put forth such requests repeatedly."<sup>186</sup>

The three Services do make an effort to post and accommodate dual service couples but only as far as the exigency of service permits. If both the partners belong to the same Service, especially in the Air Force and Navy, being relatively smaller Services with fewer duty stations it is easier to accommodate service couples together as a matter of routine. In the Navy, as long as women officers are not posted aboard ships problems such as these and other related issues involving motherhood and childcare remain dormant. A bigger and more real problem is faced by inter Service couples as collocating them poses to

be a big challenge. Even when posted in the same city they may be separated by great distances since it is rare for units of different Services to be located in the vicinity of each other. "All I seem to have done in my entire service tenure is to move applications to be posted in the same station as my husband, even when my request has been conceded too I have had to travel great distances to my place of work since our units are never collocated, the inconveniences I have faced are tremendous."<sup>187</sup> Sometimes within the Army too, collocation proves to be difficult, especially if a woman officer is married to an Infantry officer, because of large-scale deployment of officers to insurgency-prone field areas. Posting to same stations is also dependent on vacancies that may not exist immediately or due to some other pressing professional reason one partner may get posted out without completing the routine period of the tenure. In such instances couples have to wait months and sometimes a year or two before they can be reunited.

While one understands the limitations the Service Headquarters may be facing in collocating dual service couples yet the Services could do well by displaying a more positive attitude in this regard. Dual service couples routinely find themselves undergoing great tensions, seeking favours or pushing lengthy applications to be posted together and can never assume this as their right or even take it for granted that they will be considered for their postings together. At every stage, when posted together, Service couples are made to feel a sense of obligation, of a favour that has been done to them and for which they should be grateful. In its own interest and in the interest of its personnel the Service Headquarters should adopt a formal policy and set a procedure that monitors the tenure of service couples and post them together as far as possible. This will result in higher morale, productivity, efficiency and retention of officers and at the same time accrue financial benefits for the government by not having to cater for dual accommodation, transfer grants and posting claims.

## **Attrition Rates**

Due to the plethora of issues that make life far from ideal for military women, some women officers decide to opt out at the end of their five years or during the extension period. It was observed and gathered from personal interviews that they do so mainly because of family considerations such as being together with their spouse and to be able to give more attention to their hitherto neglected children. Some

ambitious women leave because they are qualified and find better job opportunities outside or jobs where there is more application of their skills. For example in the Air Force more Engineers than women with any other qualification have left Service, this is largely attributed to their professional qualification as it fetches them better and more relevant jobs outside. All such career shifts have to be well planned and done in good time, as after putting in so much service, age is no longer on the side of most women officers. Other women leave the Services simply because they fail to find the challenges and support that they had hoped for, and are beseeched with a feeling of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with a Service career. The tables below highlight the attrition rates of women officers in the Air Force and the Army. The Air Headquarters and Army Headquarters provided these figures respectively in the year 2001. Similar figures for the Navy were unavailable.

All women officers who decide to opt for an extension do so knowing that they are on borrowed time from the Services and will eventually have to leave on completion of their tenure. Yet they decide to stay on by extending their service. The reasons cited for this were more practical than patriotic – a desire to enjoy the status, security and pay of a government job for as long as they can, especially by those who were married to another officer from the same Service and have managed to be posted together. Such women admit that they are looking only at short-term gains as they want to draw the best out of their Service tenure for as long as they can and will cross the bridge of their impending career end when they come to it. Also the prospect of the general grim unemployment scenario deterred many from taking their chances outside when they had something in hand even if only for a few years. The Service Headquarters could end such dilemmas by retaining its best officers through a screening process thus benefiting the organisation as well as providing a career to the deserving.

Despite the numerous stress factors faced by military women, ranging from discriminating policies, attitudes that reek of un-acceptance to the pulls of marriage and family, all women officers interviewed wanted the option of having a career with the Armed Forces extended to them. Since women are here to stay, it would be in the best interest of the organisation to recognize and try to mitigate some of the stress factors affecting military women. These factors if unaddressed are great demotivators and leave little impetus for women to perform at peak

efficiency. Only when there are greater opportunities for women and a culture of acceptance can women be truly assimilated in the Services. Once women find such organisational support, they can establish themselves within the Service hierarchy and bring about policy changes that take into account Service requirements as well as their aspirations.

### **Air Force (Branch-wise)**

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Serving women officers</b>	<b>Retired women officers</b>
Flying (Pilots)	45	02
Aeronautical Engineer (Mechanical)	08	07
AE (Electrical)	72	42
Administration	161	31
Logistics	41	06
Accounts	23	06
Education	19	06
Meteorology	12	02

### **Army – Number of women officers who have taken release from Service (Year-wise)**

<b>Corp</b>	<b>Year</b>				
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Army Service Corp	02	02	—	02	06
Army Education Corp	02	01	03	01	01
Corp of Engineers	—	—	02	04	02
Corp of Signals	—	01	02	01	01
Corp of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	—	—	02	04	01
Army Ordnance Corp	02	03	06	09	09
Judge Advocate Generals Branch	—	—	02	02	02
Intelligence Corp	—	—	—	—	01
Total	06	07	17	23	23

# **Monitoring Mechanisms**

## **– An Overview**

With the passage of time and the growing numbers of women in the Indian Armed Forces, the Services, to utilize the capabilities of all its personnel optimally and to ensure operational effectiveness through teamwork, must affect a climate where all individuals are treated with fairness and equality. Towards this the Armed Forces must educate and generate awareness amongst its rank and file to value and show respect for all personnel. The organization itself can affirm its commitment by providing equal opportunities and proliferating policies that are not discriminatory or biased. Historically and traditionally, the Armed Forces have been a predominantly male bastion. Since women have made only recent forays, they have an inherent disadvantage of lost time and have to constantly battle prejudices and presumptions regarding their capabilities, both at the level of the organization and in their interaction as individuals. To counter this debit, the Services in their own interest must extend full organizational support to its women officers so that they can maximize their potential. The issues and concerns of equality facing military women will continue to merit separate attention as long as there are differences in the conditions of service between men and women. These differences are highlighted in the selection standards, duration of service, training, career opportunities, pay, disciplinary regulations and progression in rank. A comparison of these conditions reveals the extent to which women's service profile are unequal to those of their male counterparts and the extent of the gap yet to be bridged.

The limitations on women's role in the Armed Forces are also influenced by external factors such as national legislations, policies and regulations that prohibit gender discrimination and whether these apply to the Armed Forces due to the unique nature of military employment. These laws and policies are reflective of the larger role of women in society itself. If women are considered subordinate in society at large it is very unlikely that they will be on equal terms and conditions in the nation's military. The differences in the status of military women in different nations are indicative of the overall status of women in a given society. Legal restrictions on the roles of women further highlight the extent to which women are accorded equal rights and responsibilities as a citizen.

The exemption of the Armed Forces from legislations against discriminations also reflects the special status granted to it by individual nations.

To make the services of women more equitable, the Indian Armed Forces have the example of many western nations where the process has been continuous and ongoing, aided by positive national legislations and policies. Ahead by many decades they have deliberated, studied and experimented on the subject to arrive at many creative solutions to overcome problems similar to those besetting our Armed Forces today. In the Indian context, the issue has lacked an immediacy and seriousness, which is reflected in the little thought given to the subject by our policy planners. The Service Headquarters admit that prior to the induction of women little investment was made in any formal studies that laid out the extent of utilization of women. This coupled with the absence of any future vision has resulted in ad hoc policy changes that are mostly situational and reactionary in nature. Most glaring ones being the grant of temporary extensions, the closing and opening of entire career fields without any rationale offered and other administrative changes. The lack of a monitoring mechanism further ensures that the situation remains largely unchanged even a decade later.

Within the structure of the Armed Forces the senior leadership belongs to a generation that is conservative and has seen women performing and fulfilling mostly traditional roles. For the sake of political correctness and as long as women are no threat to the exclusive male domain of combat, women are acceptable. To delve into the issue any further to address problems of integrating and accepting women in mainstream Services does not merit their serious attention and time. Since women are a marginal entity, and are concentrated in junior levels, they lack the ‘critical mass’ and positions of power to affect any change themselves. The absence of an advisory body or a committee on women in the Services ensures that there is no common platform for women in the official channel where their point of view can be projected to policy makers and planners.

Since there is little public opinion generated on the subject, it is also not an agenda point of any political or intellectual group. In countries like the USA and UK issues relating to military women are often a part of the political agenda of many figures holding public office. Successive governments are seen as having a conservative or a liberal stance on



the role of women in national defence. For example in the USA, every major policy decision such as the opening of Service Academies to women, women being allowed aboard combat ships and taking to air in fighter cockpits are the results of Public Laws signed by the President. These were arrived at after great debates by the Congress, hearings and vote by the Department of Defence to the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate.<sup>188</sup> Initiatives on women in the Armed Forces have also been extended due to the pressure exerted by Congressional women. "In the late 1980s, there were enough women in Congress (the great majority in the House of Representatives, only two then in the Senate) with enough seniority to have an impact on the legislative construction of women soldiers".<sup>189</sup> In contrast our politicians including women politicians are mostly ignorant of even the most basic facts regarding women in the Armed Forces and can only make loose populist statements about the bright future of women in the Armed Forces, perhaps not aware that as of now the 'future' is restricted to only 10-15 years.

The profession of Arms in upholding military effectiveness shuns debates, criticisms or outside influences of any sort on its internal policy matters. That apart, feminist and women's groups have evinced little interest on the issue of women in the military. Due to their traditional allegiance with peace activism and an anti-militarization stance they are perhaps uncomfortable with the idea of women themselves wanting and volunteering to bear arms, "The issue of women in the military either seems to be trivial or ideologically awkward"<sup>190</sup> for them. On the other hand, liberal women's advocacy organizations like the National Commission on Women have been questioning the Services on policies regarding women, but appear to have little credentials or clout in the military hierarchy to be able to influence any change. No formal studies, reports or commission of enquiries have been undertaken by the Commission on the issue so far.

To ensure the integration of women in mainstream Service life, the organization has to institute certain measures that will ultimately help to formulate policy directives that will further lead to equality and empowerment of all Service members and result in the optimum utilization of all its human resources. Further, the initiation of such measures will reflect the organization's commitment to eliminate discrimination - both positive and negative, on the basis of gender and will impact attitudinal barriers towards women in everyday working

life and bring about greater acceptance. These measures could include instituting Committees or other Advisory bodies with powers to influence change, commissioning studies and reports on all aspects concerning military women and their employability and holding trials to test realities versus presumptions. The aim behind all such measures would be the effective employment of women in the military.

## **Committees and Advisory Bodies**

The Services could draw on the example of other countries and form Committees or Advisory bodies to address issues that are unique to Servicewomen. Such bodies should be constituted of individuals who have full knowledge of a range of issues concerning military women, should serve on a fixed term of some years and have direct access to senior leadership within the Services and at the ministerial level.

The agenda of such a body should be two-fold where it should monitor the implementation of Service policies, identify scope for further increasing the utilization of women and push for these further slots. They should also acquaint and provide information to senior leadership regarding ground realities of Service women that they would not be aware of if they relied solely on the regular chain of command. To glean all this information they should undertake field trips to conduct periodic investigations of units and bases where women are posted, hold conferences where commanders should brief and explain Service policies and their implementation. Once informed they can undertake comparative analysis of similar situations in other countries. On the other hand they should provide a platform to military women where they can express their concerns, needs and complaints without fear of reprisal from their own channel of command. Such bodies should serve as a reference and guidance point and help to address collectively and individually issues specific to Service women. These Committees or Advisory bodies when initiated could draw their charter and learn from the experiences of the numerous western models available since the efforts of other countries on the above regard have been an ongoing process for many decades now.

In the USA the Defence Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was set up as early as 1951 and has been at the forefront of positive change for military women. DACOWITS have been responsible for pushing through many policy changes such as equalizing promotion opportunities for women including the bill for promotion

of women to the rank of Generals and Admirals. Other changes include the ending of segregation of women in a separate Women's Corp and their integration in regular units of the Armed Forces. The ending of the arbitrary authority maintained by Services to discharge women in case of pregnancies or minor children and the unequal status of dependents of military women. More landmark decisions implemented were the opening of Service Academies including West Point to women and the lifting of statutory restrictions on women serving aboard combat ships and piloting combat aircrafts. DACOWITS, through annual conferences and fact-finding field trips develops its recommendations, which it then presents to the Secretary of Defence. Recently the federal charter of DACOWITS expired but the Pentagon is planning to develop a new charter that will enhance the role and broaden the scope for some type of women's advocacy group<sup>191</sup>.

With the increasing number of women in NATO Forces and with the increased role of NATO in various theatres it became imperative to do some in-house introspection to be able to effectively utilize all forces. NATO's Military Committee, – NATO's highest military authority, formally recognized the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces in 1976, an advisory body on critical issues affecting women in NATO forces. "The major goal of the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces is to share knowledge and information with the participating member countries on programmes that bring about the recognition and empowerment of all military members. This helps NATO countries and EAPC countries to make the best use of *all* forces in whatever environment they are assigned"<sup>192</sup>. A major concern of the NATO is the acceptance of military women both in senior positions and as compatriots in a combined force effort by all participating countries, thus the focus on sharing information among countries on programmes and techniques to integrate women in the Force. The representatives of The Committee on Women in the NATO Forces conduct studies and prepare information sheets compiling statistics and policies on women in NATO Forces. Further, regular Conferences of Senior Service Women Officers monitor other issues and agendas affecting women in NATO forces.

In Australia too various efforts in terms of conventions, legislations and policies have been initiated since the early 1980s to integrate women in its Armed Forces. Australia ratified The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

in 1983 in an effort to recognize the employment of women in combat related role. Further, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 apart from exempting the Australian Defence Forces in respect of combat duties aims to eliminate discrimination against women. In addition, in various conferences such as Women in Uniform Conference in May 1999 and the 12<sup>th</sup> Women Management and Employment Relations Conference in July 2000, the Chief of the Defence Forces himself discussed and acquiesced to the importance of the role of women in the Australian Defence Forces.<sup>193</sup>

In the Canadian Armed Forces, as early as in the 1970s programmes such as Combat Related Employment of Women (CREW) for gender free employment in the Canadian Armed Forces were underway. In 1979 a five-year programme called SWINTER (Service Women in Non Traditional Environments and Roles) was established to assess the suitability of women in combat roles.<sup>194</sup> In 1989 a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the Canadian Forces to fully integrate women in all occupation fields. Further, the Canadian Forces have formal policies to provide a work environment supportive of the dignity and self-esteem of all personnel, towards this there exist policies on harassment, sexual misconduct, racist conduct and personal relationships. The three Services also have individual programmes, to facilitate the integration of women in all career fields. As part of the Army's "Leadership in a Diverse Army" programs a handbook titled "Leadership in a Mixed Gender Environment" was created and distributed. The handbook stresses with the help of practical examples how leadership is the most effective tool to build teamwork in a unit. The Navy has a "Vision 2010 – The Integrated Navy" plan which lays down requirements, policies and other barriers to be addressed by 2010. While the Air Force's "Partnership for the Future" identifies and works to eliminate barriers to the employability of women in the Air Force. Also the Air Force's "Flight Plan for Life" program addresses many issues concerning women such as flexible work hours and work-family conflicts.<sup>195</sup>

In Israel though women are integrated in the same units as men and dispersed throughout regular units of the Army, yet a separate Women's Corp exists as a parallel administrative system and a professional support system for women. The aim of the Women's Corp is to advise on how to best realize the full potential of women soldiers in the Israeli Defence Forces. It also serves as a professional reference and guide to

commanders and military women on issues concerning women such as sexual harassment, discrimination on the basis of gender, cases of inequality in promotion and gynecological issues. The Women's Corp strives to have previously closed occupational specialties opened for women and is also responsible for formulating policies and publishing directives related to women's service as it is involved in all decision-making processes regarding women. The training and instructions imparted to Servicewomen, is also a part of the charter of the Corp. The Women's Corp also participates in public forums dealing with the status of women in Israeli society<sup>196</sup>.

The Armed Forces of UK pride themselves on being equal opportunity employers and since the 1980s have laid great stress on education and awareness of equality issues. The UK Armed Forces believe in equal opportunities for men and women and provide regular training to increase knowledge of the policies and their implementation. Towards this, their unique Tri Service Equal Opportunities Training Centre at Shrivenham provides training for dedicated Equal Opportunities Advisers and all senior officers so as to enable them to confront prejudices and act decisively to remove them.<sup>197</sup>

## **Policy Formulation**

Towards this the first and most important step for the three Service Headquarters is to set out a formal policy on Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management for the Armed Forces as is the case with the British Armed Forces. Under the umbrella of such a policy individuals are protected and given to understand that the organization values and upholds their differences. If such a policy is mandated then individuals who refuse to change or acknowledge their prejudices have no option but to abide by the policy and work within its framework. People can therefore have opinions but must learn to respect others and ensure that these do not cause offence to others.

The absence of such a policy in the Indian context has resulted in much recent embarrassment for the organization when no less than the Vice Chief of the Army Staff commented irresponsibly on the induction of women in the Armed Forces and stated that "the army can do without them".<sup>198</sup> The remark is so much more damaging coming from a person of his seniority and position of authority as it is reflective of the current inappropriate policies and culture with regards to women within the Armed Forces.

For the affected individual the promulgation of such a policy would empower them with knowledge of their rights and would reinforce a zero tolerance policy towards harassment and bullying.

The practical implementation of a wide policy like this would automatically address specific issues of discrimination and cover under its ambit revision of current policies such as the grant of only a short service commission to women, expansion of vacancies and roles for women and other career related discriminations in terms of postings, career enhancing courses, etc.

### **Equal Opportunity Advisors**

Once an Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management policy is in place the Indian Armed Forces would do well to train individuals to function as Equal Opportunity Advisors as is the case in the British Armed Forces. These Officers and NCOs would be responsible for disseminating these policies to the lowest unit level and advising unit personnel on these issues. The diversity training module must sensitize all members of the Armed Forces to issues hampering the integration of women.

### **Studies, Reports and Trials**

Apart from instituting dedicated groups that are actively involved in securing equal opportunities for military women and addressing problems specific to them, many Armed Forces world over have also commissioned and conducted several trials, reports and studies on the various aspects of the career profile of women in the Armed Forces. These have helped to dispel myths regarding the role employability of women and have helped to highlight and understand the various facts and facets of military women's service. These studies and trials have also served as the basis for many monumental decisions influencing the careers of servicewomen such as the opening of combat specialties to them. Much publicized trials to induct women in combat arms have been carried out by countries such as UK and Canada in recent years. Earliest popular studies and tests include the Maximum Women's Army Content (MAXWAC) and Return of Forces Women's Army Content (REFWAC) studies conducted by the US Army in 1976 and 1977 in sustained combat related exercises during the NATO annual 'Return of Forces to Germany (REFORGER)'- exercises in Europe.<sup>199</sup> The studies showed that the proportion of women in combat support

and combat support services did not adversely affect unit performance.<sup>200</sup> Since then many studies pertaining to women in the Armed Forces have been conducted and widely circulated by nations such as Australia, UK, Canada and other NATO countries. Apart from government agencies, various think tanks, research institutes, groups and centers concerned with military sociology, defence issues or women's advocacy have also conducted a number of studies, prepared reports and held conferences.

In the Indian Armed Forces as of now little investment has been made in any formal studies on various issues concerning women. The Manpower Directorate of the three Service Headquarters when contacted was unaware of any studies or reports conducted on the subject. The Indian Armed Forces to review the lessons learnt in the past decade and to base future policies and guidelines must conduct studies and trials on important aspects of women officers' service. This could include aspects such as training, discrimination and harassment issues, attitudes towards them, family and work conflicts, career progression, combat exclusions, etc. The issue of women in the Indian Armed Forces as compared to other national security concerns has not merited the serious attention of most Defence related think tanks or research organizations either and there is precious little research available on the subject. Seminars conducted on the subject have also failed to influence the military hierarchy to translate findings into policy directives. To generate effective public opinion on the subject more time and research will have to be devoted to the subject.

## **Legal Recourse**

In most nations in which women are major players in the Armed Forces such as the US, UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, France, Israel, Germany and Canada, national legislations exist that prohibit gender discrimination and guarantee equality between the sexes. To ensure the implementation of these legislations in recent years, courts and legal recourse have often been sought to bring about parity in the service profile of men and women. In many countries the increased roles for women is a result of direct intervention by courts on behalf of the complainant. The European Court of Justice is responsible for giving a ruling on the basis of a case, which has led to the opening of combat units of the German Armed Forces to women. Earlier too the Court's intervention was sought by a British servicewoman against the UK

Ministry of Defence regarding her inability to transfer to the Royal Marines as a chef.<sup>201</sup> In the USA all the three Services have faced litigation regarding their discriminatory policies towards women. In the 1970s cases were brought against the three Services by individuals who had been arbitrarily discharged because of pregnancy or due to having charge of minor children. Later cases were brought against the establishment for opening of Service Academies to women. The assigning of women aboard ships too was the result of a class-action suit against the Navy charging sex discrimination in that women were denied equal protection under the law. In the Indian Armed Forces too there have been cases of women approaching courts for denial of equal opportunities.<sup>202</sup> In the future the number of such cases might be more especially by women who may want to continue to serve beyond the extension period of their short service tenure but are not able to do so because of discriminatory terms and conditions of service and thus may decide to seek legal justice.

The Indian Armed Forces, to effect any future decisions on women in the Services must be in a position to make informed decisions based on facts and realities rather than presumptions and preconceptions. Towards this they must institute an advisory body based on the lines of similar endeavours in other nations. Also to understand and generate awareness of a full range of military women's issues studies, reports and trials should be conducted by the Armed Forces as well as outside agencies. Once such measures are undertaken military women will have a much needed platform and support system to make their point of view heard as a collective voice. Further trials and studies will help to establish truths about the abilities of servicewomen and this in turn will help the organisation to effectively utilise the capabilities of all its personnel – both men and women.



## End Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) are the maritime routes taken by ships to transit from one port another. During peace time these are commercial trade routes but during war these are considered as strategic corridors of military concern which are to be dominated to maintain a favourable balance of power.
- <sup>2</sup> Dr H K Srivastava, 'Women in Uniform: Observations on Some Future Problems of the Indian Armed Forces', *Indian Defence Review*, July 1992, pp 47-54
- <sup>3</sup> Dr H K Srivastava, 'Women Soldiers in the Indian Armed Forces', *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 1994, pp 58-65
- <sup>4</sup> N P Patnaik, 'Women in the Indian Navy: Can they be Inducted for Duties at Sea', *Trishul*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, 1992, pp 39-48
- <sup>5</sup> Dr Anita Nahal Arya, 'Women in Uniform: Gender Dialectics in the Indian Armed Forces' (Part I & II), *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. CXXXI, No. 543 & 544, Jan-Mar 2001 and Apr- Jun 2001
- <sup>6</sup> Santosh Singh, 'Humiliated Even as a Soldier : The Women's Battalion of the CRPF', *Manushi*, No. 135, Mar-Apr 2003
- <sup>7</sup> Anuradha M Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2002, pp 21
- <sup>8</sup> Lt Col Robert L Maginnis, 'The Future of Women in the Army', *Military Review*, Vol. LXXII (7), July 1992, pp. 21-34
- <sup>9</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives*, Boston : South End, 1983
- <sup>10</sup> Posted 12 Jun 2000, [www.militarywomen.org](http://www.militarywomen.org) date accessed?
- <sup>11</sup> Steven Goldberg, *Logic and Fallacies about Patriarchy*, [www.debunker.com](http://www.debunker.com) date accessed?
- <sup>12</sup> Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Belknap, Harvard University Press, 1998, pp 64
- <sup>13</sup> Deborah Kolb, *Is it her voice or her place that makes a difference? A Consideration of Gender Issues in Negotiation*, Current Issues Series, Kingston: Ont., Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1992
- <sup>14</sup> (Ed.) Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock and Shirley Ardner, *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development*, Delhi, 1986, pp 17
- <sup>15</sup> Robert A Baron, Donn Byrne, *Social Psychology*, New Delhi, 1995, pp 202
- <sup>16</sup> Personal interview with a male Army officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>17</sup> Valerie E Russo, 'The Constitution of a Gendered Enemy' in Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E Russo and Lorenza Sebesta (Ed.s), *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, New York, 1994, pp 55
- <sup>18</sup> Azar Gat, 'Female Participation in War : Bio Cultural Interactions', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, Dec 2000, pp 21-31
- <sup>19</sup> William J Duiker, 'Vietnam: War of Insurgency' in Nancy Loring Goldman (Ed.s), *Female Soldiers Combatants and Non Combatants?* West port: CT, 1998, pp108 check date
- <sup>20</sup> Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, 'Great Britain and the World Wars', in Goldman (Ed.s), *Female Soldiers*, pp 36

- <sup>21</sup> Maj Gen Jeanne Holm (USAF Ret.), *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, CA, 1982, pp 98
- <sup>22</sup> Jeff M Tuten, 'Germany and the World Wars', in Goldman, (Ed.s), *Female Soldiers*, pp 55-56
- <sup>23</sup> Major Blanpied, 'Women in Desert Storm', *Asia Pacific Defence Forum*, Vol.17, Issue 4, Spring 93, pp 29
- <sup>24</sup> Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, pp 100 and 128
- <sup>25</sup> Goldman and Stites, 'Great Britain and the World Wars', pp 40
- <sup>26</sup> *Women's Service in the IDF - The New Chen (Women's) Corps*, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il) date accessed?
- <sup>27</sup> *Women in the Canadian Forces*, [www.dnd.ca](http://www.dnd.ca) , 19 Oct 2001 date accessed?
- <sup>28</sup> Vicki Nielsen, 'Women in Uniform', *NATO Review*, Web edition, Vol. 49, No.2, Summer 2001, pp 26-27
- <sup>29</sup> David F. Burrelli, *Women in the Armed Forces Updated*, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org) , 12 Dec 1996
- <sup>30</sup> Sandra Carson Stanley and Mady Wechsler Segal, 'Military Women in NATO: An Update', *Armed forces and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Summer 1988, pp 575
- <sup>31</sup> Stanley and Segal, 'Military Women in NATO: An Update', pp 575
- <sup>32</sup> Stanley and Segal, 'Military Women in NATO: An Update', pp 564
- <sup>34</sup> Dana Priest, 'A Trench Between Women Jobs', *Washington Post*, Dec 28, 1997, pp A01
- <sup>34</sup> Helen Glenn Court, *Glass Ceiling Very Low In Russian Military*, [www.formandsubstance.com](http://www.formandsubstance.com) date accessed?
- <sup>35</sup> Capt Barbara A Wilson USAF (Retd.), Women in combat: Why not? [www.userpages.aug.com](http://www.userpages.aug.com) date accessed?
- <sup>36</sup> 'Women in the Armed Forces: The Role of Women in the Australian Defence Force', [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au) date accessed?
- <sup>37</sup> Capt Barbara A Wilson USAF (Retd.), *Military women of NATO Countries*, [www.userpages.aug.com](http://www.userpages.aug.com) date accessed?
- <sup>38</sup> *Women in the Canadian Forces*, [www.dnd.ca](http://www.dnd.ca)
- <sup>39</sup> Stanley and Segal 'Military Women in NATO: An Update', pp 567
- <sup>40</sup> Court, *Glass Ceiling Very Low In Russian Military*, [www.formandsubstance.com](http://www.formandsubstance.com).
- <sup>41</sup> Elisabetta Addis, 'Women and the Economic Consequences of Being a Soldier', in Addis, Russo and Sebesta, (Ed.s), *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, pp 7
- <sup>42</sup> Nielsen, 'Women in Uniform', pp 26
- <sup>43</sup> S T Das, *Indian Military and Development*, New Delhi, 1969, pp 144
- <sup>44</sup> Air Commodore S M Hundiwala, 'Women in the Armed Forces – Problems and Prospects', *NDC Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 92, pp55
- <sup>45</sup> Hundiwala, 'Women in the Armed Forces', pp 55
- <sup>46</sup> Data collected from the Service Headquarters in Jan 2002
- <sup>47</sup> Shishir Gupta, 'Sporting a Young Look', *India Today*, August 12, 2002, pp 32
- <sup>48</sup> Data made available by Service Headquarters, 2005
- <sup>49</sup> Data made available by Service Headquarters, Jan 2002

- <sup>50</sup> Details of Combat Support Arms and Services are given in earlier section.
- <sup>51</sup> Lt Cdr N P Patnaik, 'Women In the Indian Navy: Can they be Inducted For Duties at Sea', *Trishul*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp 41
- <sup>52</sup> The minimum acceptable physical standards for women candidates in the **Army** which have been reviewed in the last one year are a minimum height and weight of 152cm and 42kg respectively. In case of candidates belonging to the North East and hilly areas like Gorkhas, Nepalese, Assamese and Garwalis the height is relaxed by an additional 5cms and a weight commensurate with reduced height. In the **Air Force** in the Flying Branch the minimum acceptable height and weight are 162.5cm and 46 to 48.5 kg respectively with a leg length of 99cms. For Ground Duty Branches the minimum acceptable height is 152cm (For ethnically short statured women from North East and hilly regions of Uttaranchal the lower minima is 142cm.) and the minimum acceptable weight is 36.8kg to 41kg. The **Navy** brochure does not make any reference to the minimum acceptable height and weight laid down for candidates, though during the interviews naval women officers mentioned that the minimum acceptable height for them was 147cm with commensurate weight. Apart from meeting these laid down physical fitness standards, candidates once recommended for selection have to undergo a detailed Medical Examination to ensure that they are in good physical and mental health and free from any disability likely to interfere with their performance of duty.
- <sup>53</sup> Indian Army Advertisement for Women Special Entry Scheme (Officers) Twentieth WSES (O) Course (Mar 2002)
- <sup>54</sup> Observed during tenure at the OTA
- <sup>55</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>56</sup> Personal interviews conducted with Army cadets, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>57</sup> Personal interviews conducted with Army cadets, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>58</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>59</sup> Personal interview with a male Army officer, Suratgarh, Rajasthan, June 2002
- <sup>60</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>61</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>62</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Siliguri, Nov 2002
- <sup>63</sup> Details made available during tenure at OTA Chennai
- <sup>64</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>65</sup> Personal interview with a Navy male officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>66</sup> Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, San Francisco, 2000, pp 259
- <sup>67</sup> See Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*; Wilson, *Women in Combat: Why Not?*, <http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/combat.html> ; and also Bradley Gerber, *Women in the Military and Combat*, Florida State University, 1998. The gist of the study is as under:

Senior analyst Everett Harman at the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine at Natick, MA conducted a study "Effects of a Specifically Designed Physical Conditioning Program on the Load Carriage and Lifting performance of Female Soldiers." The study was funded to the tune of \$140,000 by the US Department of Defense to see what effects a rigorous training programme would have on an average woman. "You don't need testosterone to get strong," Harman

concluded. Through a regimen of regular jogging, weight training, and other rigorous exercise, more than 75 percent of the 41 women studied were able to prepare themselves to successfully perform duties traditionally performed by males in the military. Before training, less than 25 percent of the women were capable of performing the tasks. At the end of the training 78 percent could. All but one of the females were civilian volunteers, and none had previously adopted a routine of strenuous physical activity. The women included lawyers, mothers, students, and bartenders who thought the training would put them back in shape. The 24-week training study began in May 1995 with women spending 90 minutes a day, five days a week, building themselves up for endurance tests. They ran a two-mile wooded course wearing a 75-pound rucksack and performed squats holding a 100-pound barbell on their shoulders. Nationally certified trainers oversaw the conditioning. The scientists who wrote the report noted improvement of over 33 percent. Nearly concurrently with this test, the Ministry of Defence in Great Britain conducted the same kind of study. The Sunday Times of London reported that “by using new methods of physical training women can be built up to the same levels of physical fitness as men of the same size and build.” The British article also notes “contrary to the view of many traditionalists, the operational performance of groups improves greatly if both sexes are involved.”

<sup>68</sup> Personal interviews conducted with Army cadets, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>69</sup> Personal interviews with newly commissioned Air Force officers, Baghdogra, Nov 2001

<sup>70</sup> Personal interview conducted with an Army cadet, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>71</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002

<sup>72</sup> Personal interviews conducted with Army cadets, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>73</sup> Personal interviews with newly commissioned Navy officers, Cochin, Feb 2002

<sup>74</sup> Personal interviews conducted with Army cadets, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>75</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002

<sup>76</sup> Personal interview conducted with an Army cadet, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>77</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002

<sup>78</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002

<sup>79</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001

<sup>80</sup> Data made available by Service Headquarters in Jan 2002

<sup>81</sup> Personal interview with a male Army officer, Suratgarh, Rajasthan, June 2002

<sup>82</sup> Hundiwala, ‘Women in the Armed Forces’, pp 63

<sup>83</sup> Personal interview with a woman officer, Wellington, Dec 2001

<sup>84</sup> Enlisted rank, or Other ranks/ ‘Jawans’ are those ranks in the Armed Forces which form the bulk of the Military force as troops below the commissioned ranks. Their entry level criteria and recruitment procedures are very basic in terms of education and qualifications. While Commissioned officers are those who are selected directly as officers at a higher level to command the troops and have certain powers, authority and responsibility vested in them by virtue of a grant of commission from the President of India.

<sup>85</sup> Personal interview with a male Air Force officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002

<sup>86</sup> Inputs from CRPF Headquarters

- <sup>87</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>88</sup> Data made available by Service Headquarters, Jan 2002
- <sup>89</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>90</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>91</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Mar 2002
- <sup>92</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>93</sup> Personal interview with a released Army woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>94</sup> Personal interview with a released Air Force woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>95</sup> Personal interview with a released Army woman officer, New Delhi, Jan 2002
- <sup>96</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>97</sup> *The Hindu*, Friday, September 28, 2001, pp 15 Title of the article??
- <sup>98</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>99</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>100</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Gangtok, Nov 2001
- <sup>101</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>102</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>103</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>104</sup> Personal interview with a Navy male officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>105</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>106</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>107</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>108</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002
- <sup>109</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>110</sup> Jeff M Tuten, 'The Argument Against Female Combatants', in Nancy Loring Goldman, (Ed.s), *Female Soldiers Combatants and Non Combatants?*, West port, CT 1998, pp 237-8 check date
- <sup>111</sup> US Department of Defence definition of "direct ground combat", Heike Hasenauer and Mark Kalinoski, 'More Positions Open for Women', *Soldiers*, Vol. 49, Issue 9, Sep 1994, pp 21-22
- <sup>112</sup> Amendments to Defence Instruction (General) PERS 32-1, Employment of Women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), 31 Jan 1994
- <sup>113</sup> Col Mackubin T Owens, 'Women in Combat: Equal Opportunity or Military Effectiveness?', *Universal Military Abstracts* ( hereafter UMA), Vol. VI, No. 4, 1992-93, pp 66
- <sup>114</sup> Alexander F C Webster, 'Paradigms of the Contemporary American Soldier and Women in the Military', *Strategic Review*, Summer 1991, pp 28
- <sup>115</sup> Elaine Donnelly, 'Military Unit Cohesion', *Viking Phoenix* webpage of which date? and, article title? date page accessed?
- <sup>116</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Mar 2002
- <sup>117</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002
- <sup>118</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>119</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002

- 120 Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- 121 Personal interview with a Navy male officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- 122 Personal interview with a Navy male officer, Wellington, Mar 2002
- 123 Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- 124 Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- 125 Personal interview with an Army male officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- 126 Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- 127 Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Jan 2002
- 128 Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- 129 Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Siliguri, Nov 2001
- 130 Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- 131 Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- 132 Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, pp 251
- 133 Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, pp 261
- 134 Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, pp 95
- 135 Patricia B. Hanna, 'An Overview of Stressors in the Careers of US Servicewomen', in Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo and Lorenza Sebesta, (Ed.s), *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, New York, 1994, pp 65
- 136 Sqn Ldr E G Jones, 'Women in Combat-Historical Quirk or the Future Cutting Edge?', *Rusi Journal*, Vol. 138, Issue 4, Aug 93, pp 39
- 137 Melody Kemp, *Femme Fatale Women in the Military Service*, [www.magma.ca](http://www.magma.ca) date accessed?
- 138 J Glen Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, quoted in Owens, 'Women in Combat: Equal Opportunity or Military Effectiveness?', pp 67
- 139 Lt Col Robert L Maginnis, 'The Future of Women in the Army', *Military Review*, Vol. LXXII Issue 7, Jul 92, pp 22
- 140 Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Gangtok, Nov 2001
- 141 Personal interview with an Army male officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- 142 Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- 143 Personal interview with a Navy male officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- 144 Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- 145 Personal interview with an Army male officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002
- 146 Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Jan 2002
- 147 Julie Wheelwright, "'It Was Exactly Like the Movies!'" The Media's Use of the Feminine During the Gulf War', Addis, Russo and Sebesta, *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, pp124
- 148 Collin Levey, 'NOW vs POW Saddam's regime takes an American woman prisoner', *Opinion Journal*, March 26, 2003
- 149 David F Burrelli, 'Women in the Armed Forces Updated', Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org) , Dec 12 1996 date accessed
- 150 James Clark, 'Women will not be frontline troops', *The Sunday Times*, 27 Jan 2000, pp 4

- <sup>151</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>152</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>153</sup> Personal interview with a Navy male officer, Wellington, Mar 2002
- <sup>154</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Suratgarh, July 2002
- <sup>155</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>156</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>157</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, New Delhi, Jan 2002
- <sup>158</sup> Hundiwala, 'Women in the Armed Forces', pp 65
- <sup>159</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Siliguri, Nov 2001
- <sup>160</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>161</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Jan 2002
- <sup>162</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>163</sup> Karen O Dunivin, 'Adapting to a Man's World: United States Air Force Female Officers', *Defense Analysis*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1991, pp 97
- <sup>164</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, New Delhi, Dec 2001
- <sup>165</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002
- <sup>166</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>167</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>168</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Suratgarh, Jul 2002
- <sup>169</sup> Karen O Dunivin, 'Adapting to a Man's World: United States Air Force Female Officers', *Defense Analysis*, Vol.7, No.1, 1991, pp 100
- <sup>170</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Jan 2002
- <sup>171</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>172</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>173</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>174</sup> Out of these four women interviewed one was from the Air Force, one from the Navy and two from the Army. The location of the interviews is not relevant in the context since the incidents had not occurred there but in units where these women officers were posted in earlier tenures.
- <sup>175</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>176</sup> Personal interview with an Army male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>177</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Baghdogra, Nov 2001
- <sup>178</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Chennai, Feb 2002
- <sup>179</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Suratgarh, Aug 2002
- <sup>180</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>181</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Wellington, Jan 2002
- <sup>182</sup> Personal interview with an Army woman officer, Cochin, Feb 2002
- <sup>183</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Suratgarh, Aug 2002
- <sup>184</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force woman officer, Bangalore, Mar 2002
- <sup>185</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002
- <sup>186</sup> Personal interview with an Air Force male officer, Wellington, Apr 2002

- <sup>187</sup> Personal interview with a Navy woman officer, Cochín, Feb 2002
- <sup>188</sup> Maj Gen Jeanne Holm (USAF Ret.), *Women in the Military An Unfinished Revolution*, CA, 1982
- <sup>189</sup> Cynthia H Enloe, 'The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier' in Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E Russo and Lorenza Sebesta (Ed.s), *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, New York, 1994, pp 88
- <sup>190</sup> Enloe, 'The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier', pp 89
- <sup>191</sup> Belshaw Jim, Military Women Loose their Voice, [www.abqjournal.com](http://www.abqjournal.com) date accessed?, March 2002; and Holm, *Women in the Military An Unfinished Revolution*, pp 151 and 198
- <sup>192</sup> Major General Marcelite Harris, Recognizing the role of women in NATO's military forces, *The Times* date?
- <sup>193</sup> 'Women in the Armed Forces: the role of Women in the Australian Defence Force', [www.apf.gov.au](http://www.apf.gov.au) date accessed?
- <sup>194</sup> Hundiwala, 'Women in the Armed Forces', pp 51
- <sup>195</sup> Feature Story, Women in the Canadian Forces, [www.dnd.ca](http://www.dnd.ca) , 19 Oct 2001 date accessed?
- <sup>196</sup> Women's Service in the IDF- The New Chen (Women's) Corps, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il) date accessed?
- <sup>197</sup> Key Facts, Equal Opportunities in the Armed Forces, [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk) date accessed?
- <sup>198</sup> The Guardian, 19 June 2006 title of the article?
- <sup>199</sup> Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*
- <sup>200</sup> Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, pp 257
- <sup>201</sup> 'Women in the Armed Forces: the role of Women in the Australian Defence Force', [www.apf.gov.au](http://www.apf.gov.au) date accessed?
- <sup>202</sup> Refers to cases discussed in earlier sections of this paper.