

10. CONCLUSIONS & **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 Conclusions from the Study

The broad ranging roles of the Indian Army extend beyond conventional, Infantry heavy, dismounted operations in harsh environments and include, for example, international peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, counter-terrorism and ecological missions. These wide ranging tasks form a vital part of the core function of the Army, to preserve the integrity of India and to be prepared for the full spectrum of security challenges. The Army therefore require high caliber recruits who are capable of successfully tackling the broad range of tasks they will face to fill the ranks as both officers and jawans.

For several years the Indian Army has faced a considerable recruiting challenge, especially for officers, and all the signs are that for the foreseeable future this will be exacerbated by the rising aspirations of young Indians in terms of financial rewards, lifestyle, freedom of choice, quality of life and family stability. These themes are being courted by high technology industries, business and commerce in India which are perceived as more attractive career options at a time when the Army is seen as a harshly disciplined way of life accompanied by lack of personal freedom, with hardship and danger as constant companions. It is concluded that the Indian Army will continue to face increasing competition to recruit the number of young people of the right quality necessary to maintain operational capability as the range and intellectual complexity of soldiering tasks increases in the Army.

Concurrently, at the highest policy level, India's full commitment to the empowerment and equality of women is very clear and was summed up by the Prime Minister in August 2005 when he said "No society can claim to be part of the modern civilized world unless it treats its women at par with men." In this context, in accordance with the National Policy for

Women endorsed in 2001, every Government Department is required to prepare action plans and report to the Indian Government against a series of national gender metrics.

Meanwhile the massive efforts being made across India to improve standards of health and education, especially for women are achieving very positive results. The consequence is that there is an abundance of fit and healthy, highly motivated and well qualified young women seeking challenging, rewarding careers. These women come from a society which is increasingly well informed, more liberal in outlook and challenging traditional cultural values, societal boundaries and gender restrictions.

It is concluded that, at a time when the Army is and will continue to face growing recruiting challenges and a widening of the tasks they are to perform on operations, so the young women of India are better educated, physically more healthy, more liberal in outlook, seek fresh career opportunities and face life in a country which is fully committed to granting them equality and empowerment.

The 88th Mahila Battalion of CRPF is an epitome of courage, bravery and capacity to face danger. The women of this battalion have won laurels as part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, and active service in insurgency prone states of Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Punjab and other areas. Their record speaks very highly of them and their prowess and chivalry is an indicator of how our women officers in the regular Armed Forces are likely to fare. They even do better under combat conditions, given proper training and equipment.

Another case in point is the All Women Police Station in Tamil Nadu, which is the first of its kind in the country complete with a crèche and other facilities for the children of the women policemen. And to top it all, Tamil Nadu has again taken a lead by raising the first All Women Commando Force to be formed into a Women Commando Battalion. The training program has given women to prove that they are equal to or even better than their male counterparts. They have put to rest any lingering doubt about physical endurance of women

by trekking 38 km in one night. Their shooting skills have received applause from experts as they were on target even while being seated on moving motorcycles or jeeps.

The Army training instructors found female cadet officers very intelligent, decisive, confident, well spoken, adding other superlative adjectives. Many Commandants found commanding lady officers a worthwhile experience though they felt that troops would only obey command from someone who would match them physically and with whom they can identify themselves. However, under the Indian system of training, instant obedience is not weighed by a jawan in terms of physical equality but with the confidence officer gives the orders and the clarity of his directions. The Army would have to be very careful that myths and stereotypes do not continue to dominate about women officers in the regular forces, amongst troops and in units and training schools.

Women can efficiently combine being a mother and the Army profession provided they are sensibly placed in their jobs. In the light of new experiences and women issues as well as demolition of various myths about women there is every possibility that women officers would obtain Permanent Commission in the full spectrum.

Against this background it appears prudent to formally review the results of Women's Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and the current manning and recruiting policy of the Indian Army with a view to offering women wider opportunities and equality. Informal evidence suggests that since 1993 the experiment to commission up to 150-200 women into the Indian Army every year on Short Service (now 14 years) engagements has been an outstanding success. There is a need to further build up on this experiment and open more avenues in the Army for women by giving them diversified roles. This mirrors the experience in the Armies elsewhere in the developed world who have fully integrated women into their Armies, both as officers and other ranks, most often on identical terms and conditions of service as men.

The primary consideration in employing men or women in the Army must be the ability to deliver the required operational capability. No longer is it relevant to consider soldiers in the "front line" necessarily more vulnerable or exposed to greater danger from enemy action than

those in the rear areas. Indeed under many operational scenarios it may be most hazardous on long lines of communication or in rear areas. Therefore, in terms of the employment and deployment of soldiers, it is concluded that physical closure with the enemy in high intensity war fighting scenarios, rather than proximity to the threat of hostile action, represents the greatest risk and severest physical and emotional challenge to soldiers. The consequence is that the historical emphasis on Herculean physical strength and endurance which has been the desired hallmark of many Armies is far less relevant and the only arms or services from which women are generally excluded on physical grounds are the Arms in direct combat role. A detailed analysis of the personal attributes necessary to successfully undertake operational tasks and the development of gender free physical assessment linked directly to operational roles would be hugely successful in best matching individuals to the army and would broaden employment options for women.

It is concluded that women have a major contribution to make to the operational capability within the Indian Army as both officers and jawans. However, it is clear that the wider social, cultural and religious environment within India, and especially in the rural areas, is not yet conducive to giving women these opportunities. As a consequence, to succeed, any strategy to more widely employ women in the Indian Army should be implemented incrementally and be built on existing arrangements. It would be inappropriate to seek a blueprint for this initiative which must take full account of national circumstances, however, lessons can be learned from other Armies. It is concluded that the dividends of more widely employing women as both officers and jawans in the Indian Army would outweigh the disadvantages and be considerable in terms of:

10.1.1 Enhanced operational capability – especially in providing the highly intelligent and capable women officers suitably trained for specialist roles for operations other than war and also in high intensity technological battlespaces.

10.1.2 Enhanced recruiting – in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Will suitably address the persistent shortage of officers. Induction of women in ranks below officers, as jawans, will subsequently ensure full integration of women in the mainstream Indian

army. This will enhance the acceptance level of the environment for women in the Army and implementation of better policies and procedures for them.

10.1.3 Enhanced image – be seen as a vibrant, modern organization that is prepared to move with the times and shares the Nations commitment to equality and empowerment. If the Army is prepared to take this bold step then this would send a massive and very positive modernisation message nationally and internationally.

10.1.4 Give priority to much needed infrastructure enhancements. However, women should neither be introduced in a quasi-non-operational role nor on a token basis but must be integrated and considered by default for employment and deployment in all areas unless there are specific operational penalties for not doing so. This is a reversal of an approach that seeks out specific employment opportunities.

The first batch of lady officers is out of the Army after the extension of fourteen years. It has been acknowledged by professional military officers who have served with, or commanded women officers that women are smart, dedicated and technically competent. They are also equally/ better educated than their male counterparts. Irrespective of raising a debate between the killing spirit and motherly love, the fact remains that the Army is very cautiously and slowly considering expansion of the opportunities for women. Were it not for women, with their superior formal education and mental test scores, their places would have had to be filled by lower-quality male volunteers.

The all-volunteer Indian Army of future, resting on the foundation of hi-tech capabilities, cannot hope to fill all its military operational services only through male entrants, more of whom will be attracted towards and absorbed by national growing industrial and technical capabilities. The Indian nation is turning out large number of technically trained women, many of whom can only find opportunities, career and upward social mobility in the military profession. The full integration of women throughout the Army is inevitable and the sooner it is done, easier the transition will be.

10.2 Meeting Objectives of the Study and evaluation of the Hypotheses

10.2.1 The first Objective of the study was:

“To examine the adequacy of recruiting policies and QRs to ensure induction of the most suitable women in the Indian Army.”

This objective was met after deliberations as brought out in Chapter Four. All related aspects have been studied and analyzed. Findings have been discussed and recommendations made in this Chapter. This has further led to the evaluation of the first Hypothesis of the study.

10.2.2 The first Hypothesis of the study was:

H₀ - The recruiting policies and QRs are adequate for inducting the most suitable women in the Indian Army.

H₁ - The recruiting policies and QRs need to be modified for inducting the most suitable women for specialist roles in the Indian Army.

Result of evaluation of the first Hypothesis:

Reject H₀ in favour of H₁.

10.2.3 The second Objective of the study was:

“An assessment of the complex cultural issues surrounding the status and role of Indian women and their employment in the Army.”

An account of discussions for meeting this objective has been given in Chapters Five and Six. Considering the socio-cultural fabric of our country, the employment related problems for women and their on ground concerns have been discussed in detail in these Chapters. Based on the findings, recommendations have been made. This has also led to the evaluation of the second Hypothesis of the study.

10.2.4 The second Hypothesis of the study was:

Ho – There is a need for wider employment of women in the Indian Army.

Result of evaluation of the second Hypothesis:

Do not reject Ho.

10.2.5 The third Objective of the study was:

“To examine whether the existing career opportunities and training for women in the Indian Army best meet the future needs of a technological, highly capable, operationally focused and heavily committed Army.”

This objective has been met by means of deliberations and analysis of various aspects of training of women in the Indian Army in Chapter Seven. On analysis of these aspects, recommendations have been made for bringing necessary changes in the existing system of training and career progression of women in the organization. This has also led to the evaluation of the third Hypothesis of the study.

10.2.6 The third Hypothesis of the study was:

Ho – Existing career opportunities and training for women in the Indian Army best meet the future needs of a technological, highly capable, operationally focused and heavily committed Army.

H₁ – Career opportunities and training curriculum for women in the Indian Army needs to be re-designed for meeting the future needs of a technological, highly capable, operationally focused and heavily committed Army.

Result of evaluation of the **third Hypothesis:**

Reject Ho in favour of H₁.

10.2.7 The fourth Objective of the study was:

“To work out the Satisfaction Quotient of the Serving and Retired women officers and analyze opinion of their spouses, peers and PBOR”

This objective has been met by means of analyses of responses collected from the environment through means of questionnaires. This analysis has been done in detail category-wise in Chapter Eight. The Satisfaction Quotient for the Serving as well as the Retired women officers has also been worked out in this Chapter. This has also led to the evaluation of the fourth Hypothesis of the study.

10.2.8 The fourth Hypothesis of the study was:

Ho – The individual aspirations of the women officers of the Indian Army are fully addressed.

H₁ – The environment needs to be sensitized and policies need to re-defined for fully addressing the individual aspirations of the women officers of the Indian Army.

Result of evaluation of the **fourth Hypothesis:**

Reject Ho in favour of H₁.

10.2.9 The fifth Objective of the study was:

“To recommend some future role prospects for women in the Indian Army.”

This objective has been met in Chapter Nine of the study wherein future role of women in the Indian Army has been discussed and six role prospects have been suggested for them. This has also led to the evaluation of the fifth Hypothesis of the study.

10.2.10 The fifth Hypothesis of the study was:

Ho - The future role prospects for women in the Indian Army need to be defined.

Result of evaluation of the **fifth Hypothesis:**

Do not reject Ho.

10.3 Recommendations

The need to think of women soldiers' career and service requirement is now, and not few years hence. Each entry experience will enable the Army to refine the career profile, service requirements, personnel management, unit bonding and annual projections to the

government. The Indian Military bureaucracy has to rewrite its future policies about women personnel.

The recommendations for the future construct of permanent integration of women into the Army would look like this:

10.3.1 Induction

- (a) Identify Specialist Branches and trades for induction of women officers keeping in view the futuristic battlespace requirements. Highly technology intensive future warfare will be conducive for induction of technically qualified Women specialist officers and will overcome their physiological deficiency criterion. There are adequate number of technically qualified women in the country willing to join the Army and will address the existing shortage of male officers.
- (b) Opening more avenues for women in the Indian Army as in other major Armies of the world will attract more numbers. Diversified roles will ensure wider employability and shall make the Indian Army a lucrative career option for women.
- (c) Suitable qualification requirements have to be laid down for these specialist roles and suitably qualified women should be inducted for these roles based on their basic qualification.
- (d) Induct women into the ranks and have an organisation on the lines of the other Armies of the world. The CRPF initiative and the raising of first all women commando force after the first all women police station by the Tamil Nadu Police bear testimony to successful experimentation even in our country.
- (e) Once the policies for induction of women in the ranks below officers and in Arms of service involved in direct combat role are formulated, the suitably qualified women will be selected for these branches as per the laid down qualification requirements.
- (f) Women's NCC wing at schools and colleges to be further strengthened to act as feeder institutions imparting basic training, thereby minimising some of the problems of physical limitations in women. Setting up Sainik schools exclusively for women or

setting up separate wings for women in the existing Sainik schools shall be a good initiative in this direction.

- (g) There ought to be a conscious linking of induction of women into the Army with their status in the society to bring about a mindset change in both men and women. It can be done through effective media programmes and sensitisation workshops.

10.3.2 Training

10.3.2.1 Pre- Commissioning Training (Officers)

- (a) The duration of the pre-commissioning training should be at par with the male officers. Presently, it is 49 weeks. The training period should be between 12-18 months to effectively train women officers to become agile future leaders.
- (b) The course curriculum should be adequate and comprehensive to train women as officers. The curriculum should be regularly updated to meet changing requirements of the times.
- (c) The various aspects should be adequately addressed including the Physical training, weapon training including futuristic weapon systems, IT and future warfare technologies, Military law and military organization. More practical demonstrations and exercises should form part of the curriculum.
- (d) This training can be bifurcated into two parts- Basic military training and then the chosen trade specific. The basic military training should impart all military skills expected and desired to be present in an officer and trade training should aim to inculcate the technical trade skills for making them assets for an operationally reliable organization.
- (e) There should be no gender bias in the training curriculum for the male and female cadets in the training academy.

10.3.2.2 Post Commissioning Training (Officers)

- (a) Once women officers are commissioned in their respective branch as per their basic qualifications, they should be regularly trained with the technical and tactical skills specific to their branch.

- (b) Women officers should be detailed for career and equipment specific courses for their career progression. Career courses are mandatory for promotions to higher ranks. Women officers should be given a fair chance to do these courses and then face an open and gender free competition for promotions to higher ranks.
- (c) All officers should be encouraged and facilitated to acquire higher civil qualification for their personal and organizational growth. Measures such as sparing the officers, granting them leave/ study leave and subsidizing their fees for acquiring these qualifications can be adopted for encouraging individual officers.

10.3.2.3 Training (Women in ranks)

- (a) With the onset of induction of women as soldiers (in ranks below officers), there will be a requirement for setting up of separate wings for their training at the existing Training Centres for jawans.
- (b) Every branch of the Army has its own training centre for its jawans. This centre imparts both the basic military training as well as the trade specific training to the soldiers. This model can also be used for the women soldiers.
- (c) Using same centre but different wings for training the men and women soldiers will suitably sensitise the male soldiers for accepting the female soldiers as their colleagues and their integration in the mainstream Army. The training curriculum can be suitably designed to keep some components of the training including some exercises and demonstrations as common. This will give the male soldiers first hand experience of the capabilities of women and hence their acceptance will become easier.

10.3.4 HR Policies

- (a) Enhance motivation and commitment of women officers through professional development systems and officer career management system.
- (b) Meticulously plan and implement postings and appointments of the women officers. Minimum 3-4 women officers should be posted together in a station specially in field areas. Spouse postings should be materialized to the best extent possible. These policies

should not be existing only on paper, their on ground implementation should be ensured by means of regular feedbacks from the environment.

- (c) Most of the lady officers want to quit service after their marriage and childbirth since they find it difficult to effectively discharge both obligations simultaneously. They find the organization insulated in respect of their responsibilities towards their families. Army must evolve effective and considerate policies to overcome this genuine hardship.
- (d) Serving in the Army many a times entail long spells of separation from families and loved ones. Therefore, leave plays an important part in overall motivation level of all ranks. If genuine requirement of leave is denied by the superior and is dealt with lack of empathy, it leads to frustration and low morale. This becomes a more sensitive issue in hard field areas. Leave should be granted as due and desired, unless in case of exigency of service. Also, entitlement for child care and maternity leave for Central Government women employees is more as compared to the women officers of the Army. These entitlements should be at par.
- (e) Promotion prospects in respect of women officers need a holistic review. They should be granted Permanent Commission first and then promoted to higher ranks after facing an open and fair competition with their male counterparts. The promotion policies in the organization should be totally fair and transparent. If otherwise, it leads to frustration and highly demotivate the able and eligible officers.
- (f) An overall career management plan covering short term and long term deployment, training and employability, including such issues like inclusion to combat and also in ranks below officers in future.
- (g) A review board must be set up in Adjutant General branch (policy making set up) for attending to lady officers' problems and grievances. An enforcement officer to be nominated to ensure involvement of a woman during formulation and drafting of policies for them. This officer would be able to better empathise with the grievances of women officers for effective redressal.
- (h) A regular monitoring system should be effectively implemented for getting feedbacks from the environment and speedy and suitable redressal of grievances if any.

10.3.5 Satisfaction Levels

- (a) All women getting inducted in the Army expect the fulfilment of their aspirations. Many factors collectively work towards giving job satisfaction to the women officers.
- (b) The women officers should be treated at par with their male counterparts. Fair and transparent policies with no gender discrimination count towards increased satisfaction level of women officers in the Army.
- (c) If the career in the Army remains a contract, it will never lead to full satisfaction of an individual officer. The option of Permanent Commission should be granted to women at par with their male counterparts.

10.3.6 Employability and Future Roles

- (a) The present roles of women in the Army need to be diversified further. More and more roles need to be identified for them keeping in view requirements of a futuristic Army.
- (b) Gradually widen the employability of women officers from the support services to the direct combat role branches of the Army.
- (c) Grant them Permanent Commission and give them an opportunity for a fair competition with their male counterparts for selection to the Commanding positions. If women officers are found eligible in an open competition with their male counterparts, then they would definitely be capable of Commanding troops.
- (d) In case when Permanent Commission cannot be granted to them for some reason, then there should be a provision to laterally absorb women officers into our para-military forces like BSF, CRPF or Home Ministry after their contractual period of Short Service Commission. The talent of a trained workforce should not be wasted and may be harnessed in the best interests of the country. This option may be open to them till the provision of Permanent Commission is not brought into force and even afterwards.
- (e) There may also be a provision to laterally absorb them into other defence sister organisations like DGQA, DRDO, DRL, MES, Ordnance factories and defence PSUs. Some of the future role prospects are discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

- (f) Government to allocate more funds for successfully completing promise of equal opportunity under the Directive Principles of Indian Constitution.
- (g) Service leaders must sustain a campaign to eliminate perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that hinder the full integration of women in the Army.
- (h) Deploy these lady officers according to the needs of the Army and individual's competence.

10.4 The recommended Road-map

The recommended road-map envisage the incorporation of the above recommendations as the bases for taking policy decisions. Additionally, the following guidelines may be adopted for effective implementation:

- (a) A formal review be conducted of the Women's Special Entry Scheme (WSES).
- (b) An overarching personnel strategy be formulated as an essential part of the Indian Army Plan. The strategy would helpfully be underpinned by a vision along the lines of generating and maintaining a battle winning Army, by placing personnel and their families at the center of plans, investing in them and giving them confidence in their future.
- (c) An enabling roadmap with measurable outputs to encourage real progress, be produced which should dovetail the Army plan with the National Policy of Women in accordance with Government direction.
- (d) The establishment of a project to independently and scientifically evaluate and validate the minimum physical standards required of Army trades relative to operational capability and subsequent development of gender free physical assessment and training where appropriate. Emphasis should be given to intellect as well as strength and physical endurance requirements.

(e) Identification of diversified roles for women keeping in mind the future battlespaces. Induction of suitably qualified women for these roles and then training them adequately for making them worthy leaders of the future.

(f) The establishment of a team to plan the introduction of female jawans into the Indian Army. The following aspects should be included:

(i) An incremental approach is essential in order first and foremost to bring a paradigm shift in the mindset and also to put in place the necessary infrastructure, policy and plans to better accommodate the employment of women.

(ii) Establishing recruiting and training linkages with the female members of the NCC.

(iii) Initial focus should be on the recruitment of women into those technical trades identified as areas of greatest recruiting difficulty and under-manning, where significant operational benefit would be derived on non-war fighting deployments.

(iv) Initially it may be prudent to limit numbers in units to platoon size and company or squadron level in regimental/ battalion sized units. But at all costs tokenism should be avoided. The ultimate aim should be to fully integrate women in the mainstream Army.

(v) These policies need to be formulated for effective implementation. It is not a feasibility study but a planning task and should include appropriate infrastructure, legal, policy, procedural and operational strands and provide clear direction on the actions required to prepare Indian society for this historic decision.

(g) A plan to bring the terms and conditions of service for female officers fully into line with their male counterparts. Grant of Permanent Commission and opening doors of Combat roles are the issues demanding immediate attention. Adequate sensitization of the organization and

all stakeholders including the decision makers for making the Army completely gender-insulated and transparent.

(h) Making women an integral part of the mainstream Army, so that there is no adhocism in the policy formulation processes for them. This will automatically address the issue of satisfactorily meeting their aspirations. Empathetic HR policies and a well-planned career progression will resolve the on ground concerns of the presently enrolled women.

(i) The appointment of an Army women's champion/ enforcement officer, within the Adjutant General's Branch, to ensure the involvement and engagement of women in the planning process. This is essential to provide reassurance and the unique female insight into gender issues without which plans will fail or lack the complete addressing of all problems. Rank must not be allowed to constrain this work, it is empowerment and the alignment of accountability, authority and responsibility which is the key to success. The individual should also be responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan for wider employment of women in the Indian Army.

If the Indian Army is bold enough to implement these far reaching and historic recommendations they will immediately reap huge benefits in terms of a revitalised twenty first century image and be recognised as an enlightened employer, fiercely proud of traditions, values and standards but, at the same time, anxious to reflect the society it is tasked to defend and from which it attracts excellent people.

“..... we may note that when women join the Army in a big way, it will be a healthier and more cohesive force. Women will have the satisfaction of serving their country better. The dreams of women transcend all boundaries, though they vary from place to place. The status of women will get a true boost if they are allowed to enter the portals of the Army and fight for their country side by side with men. Let us hope that this historic day is not too far off.”