

Working/ Role of women in CISF

Kalpana, Ph.D(Psychology)

Corresponding Author: Kalpana, Ph.D(Psychology)

Date of Submission: 11-04-2019

Date of acceptance: 26-04-2019

There are 8264 women working in CISF, at the time of writing. This is a very small minority in a Department that is more than 1,50,000 strong. But, this is the largest group of women in all the CAPF's. The first batch of women Constables was recruited in 1987, the first batch of women SI's in 1990, the first ASI's in 2010, and the very first woman AC was Mrs. Alaka Nanda Dash in 1989, who has since quit on VR. The early batches of lady Constable's and SI's were trained in the Training Centre in Barwaha, MP. Mrs. Dash was trained in the CRPF Academy in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, where CISF AC's were trained before NISA was established. So, from the time that CISF took shape as a formal Department in 1968, for close to 20 years, a small number of women employed under short-term contracts did the work of checking at gates of State-owned enterprises. Thus, women had a delayed start, and this delay has still not been closed after three decades. The percentage of women is unusually low. In most other wings of the State and Central Governments, women have caught up with men at least in numbers if not in true equality and parity. Perhaps the reason behind the lag is that CISF staff is deployed in many hazardous industries and in remote, difficult locations. There are numerous hard areas or terrains other than Kashmir or the inaccessible North-Eastern provinces. The relative lack of safety and precariousness of these locations tends to keep women out. But, CISF women are largely found in airports, Government buildings, historical buildings, the Delhi Metro, steel plants, DAE Units, ISRO Units, seaports, oil installations, some coal installations and in some UN missions.

Women join CISF as Constables, Head Constable/clerks, ASI's, SI's and Assistant Commandants (through the UPSC examination). There are still no women drivers or armourers or fire wing personnel. The recruitment for women follows the same pattern as that for men, but with different standards of physical attributes like height and build, and running speed. The standards of selections are high, and there is tough competition. The tendency of Indian families to over-protect their daughters is apparent when we find more women participate in the recruitments for clerks and stenographers.

In industrial settings, CISF women employees check bags of women regular employees, visitors and contract workers, and frisk them before entry. In ISRO and DAE offices, these checks are repeated at exit points also. In airports, women staff check tickets and entry passes at entry points. Inside the security hold areas (SHAs) of airports, they check cabin baggage of both men and women passengers on both the x-ray machines and manually, and frisk women passengers. In seaports also, our women staff do similar checks in the passenger terminals. In addition, they check passes and bags at the entry points of the seaports. Similar checks are done by women in Delhi Metro. CISF women have kept passengers safe on land, sea and in the air. In Delhi metro, women's checking teams patrol trains also.

In Government buildings, women check passes and bags of women visitors and employees. In some places they frisk also. A select group of women from the airport sector, Delhi Metro and Government building security have been trained in the **Filipino martial art** for women called **Pekiti-Tirsia-Kali**. They are now capable of protecting attackers in enclosed settings. In DMRC and airports, women are deployed in the crime and intelligence (CIW) also, and help in passenger profiling.

Apart from client-based work, large numbers of women are needed when recruitment drives are started. For managing women candidates and checking them prior to entry, many women staffers are utilized.

In contrast to the work done by women in CRPF and BSF, CISF women staffs do not work in internal security (IS) duties. Women in **CRPF** are engaged in law and order duties, vehicle checking at road blocks, election duty and crowd control. In **BSF**, women do border patrols, search and combing operations, house searches, vehicle searches, and community confidence-building exercise. In **CISF**, women work within the confines of the client organization, performing a limited type of duties.

In UN mission, women have joined as officers only. Women have worked successfully in peacekeeping missions, in training missions as instructors, and in administrative missions as coordinators.

Women from CISF have excelled in the arena of sports. They have participated in the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, World Police Games, All India Police Games, State games and national tournaments. Lady/Inspector Kuheli Ganguly in an ace-shooter and has done CISF and the country proud. She represented

CISF in the 50 m Rifle Prone Event and won the National Championship Title and set a new national record with 626.5 points.

Like recruitment follows similar procedures for men and women, so too does training. There is a long programme of basic training with physical fitness training, drill, weapons training, commando training, basic swimming, computer operations, x-ray machine operations, office procedures, and basic horse riding for women officers. Women trainees work with the same rope gallows, obstacles, rock and cliff faces as their men colleagues. On the ground, punishments for inattention or mistakes are the same for all. Women become tough, self-confident and resilient through training. A physically toned and strong body is an asset that serves us well for years to come. Training academies also pay close attention to the dietary requirements of trainees, with dedicated officers keeping close watch to ensure the food is a balanced and wholesome mix of carbs, proteins, vegetables and fruits. There are consultant dieticians too, who take classes and give tips on meal planning. Every institute has medical facilities to deal with injuries or other ailments. But the benefits of the training are also accentuated as the girls are selected in part on the basis of physical standards. We find that most of the girls are relatively fitter (and so do better in the competition for recruitment) and are of the athletic type. They are interested in sports and enjoy physical activities.

Women are found to be expert and very talented in working in pass sections using modern software, CCTV control rooms and in training. Some of the best instructors in CISF are women, conducting training in diverse areas of specialization ranging from PT, WT, drill, legal matters, accounts, office procedures, aviation security, use of X-BIS and soft skills.

Women Constable are promoted to become Head Constables and ASI's, while women ASI's and SI's become Inspectors. A women Inspector does the same kind of work as a man. She is the Company commander leading about 80 people and supervises their work. Her work is not gender-specific. This is the case for women Gazetted Officer's (GO's) also. They supervise and are responsible for general administration like their men colleagues.

There is also a large number of women who have been appointed on compassionate ground. They are widows and daughters of former male employees. They join as Constables or ASI's. With the widows, the fact that they are older and have had no previous work experience is a stumbling block in the initial years. They pick up pieces of their lives after some years, and become energetic professionals with training and working in the field in a vibrant environment.

Like their sisters in other industries or other wings of the Government, women in CISF are concerned about issues related to separate bathrooms and changing rooms, availability of crèches, night duty during pregnancy, frequent tours out of town, lowered fertility thanks to stress, spousal employment, gender discrimination and insensitivity, and financial savings and investments.

The organizational welfare mechanisms ensure there are plenty of benefits like married and single accommodation (that is rent-free up to the rank of Inspector), free transport to place of work and back, proximity to schools and hospitals, cashless medical services, options for higher education while in service, long maternity leave, long childcare leave (many State Government bodies like schools do not give child care leave to teachers) and subsidized canteen services. There is also a strong mechanism in place to deal with complaints of sexual harassment.

The story about women in CISF is not restricted to just the women employees. The wives and daughters of staff are equally important stakeholders. Welfare activities focused on them have been going on for many years, but were given a formal platform in 2013 when the wives' welfare organization was launched called 'Sanrakshika', it is a fusion word consisting of 'sanrakshan' or protection and a feminine suffix 'ika'. Under the aegis of 'Sanrakshika', welfare activities for wives and children are arranged on a regular basis in the Units. Skill building, vocational training, employment generation, health awareness camps, screening camps, forestation drives, social and community outreach, fairs, picnics, cultural programmes, sports events, adult education and counseling services are some of the activities arrange. 'Sanrakshika' also publishes a magazine for creative pieces by women. Units run beauty parlors, grocery counters, papad-making units, pickle-making units, tailoring shops and snack shops with the service of wives and daughters. The institutional support encourages entrepreneurship and helps in financial independence.

In order to include the real 'voices' of women working in CISF, I did a limited interview survey of women in different ranks in different industries. The sample does not pretend to be representative but the stories shared do provide interesting insights into how women in CISF feel about working here. All names have been camouflaged but ranks have been quoted to give perspective to the vignettes. One thing that struck me immediately as I listened to the women was something I had noticed over the 15 years that I have worked in CISF: great pride in wearing the uniform. I feel that women are prouder and more particular about their uniforms than men. Men have many other things to express themselves with, But women have nothing....' This remark holds true for women even now in India. Not very many women can say openly that they have many avenues for self-expression. Indian women express themselves through henna on their hands, bindis, jewellery,

clothes, slippers, sandals and accessories. So, too, the uniform for women employees. They reported great pride in wearing it. While the khaki shirt and trousers combo is the prescribed form of uniform, the khaki sari is also accepted when worn with brown or black shoes for pregnant women or for ministerial staff. The khaki salwar kameez is also favoured by pregnant women when they cannot handle the sari when they are full and heavy. Whichever form of uniform they choose, women's uniforms are crisply ironed and extremely neatly worn. Women's trouser creases are sharp like knives, their hair is perfectly coiffed with not a strand out of place, their make-up is subtle in keeping with the uniform but pretty enough to make them glow, and their self-confidence is their best accessory. When they report for duty, I have noted the women's eyes flash with smartness and energy. They can take on the world, and say it was all in a day's work! ASI/Exe 'X' who has been in CISF for 03 years, and has been in the Airport Sector all this time, said that she has changed as a person thanks to wearing the uniform. Her self-confidence is much higher than what it was, and that she has no hesitation or fear left. She gives credit to the training she received that has transformed her from an ordinary girl to a fearless woman.

Training is something that all the women I spoke to had enjoyed and cherished. They said not only did the basic training prepare them for CISF, but also for life as a whole! L/Hct/GD 'Y', who works in a government building security, said that they learned to distinguish the good from the bad, the untrustworthy people from the well-intentioned, to deal with the world in a confident manner, and to be practical problem-solvers. She said that the classes on profiling and soft skills that she has attended have inspired her to think in an altogether new way. She has also relished working in different cities and in different industries and Sectors.

SI/Exe 'Z', who is working in Delhi Metro for 05 years. She said the most valuable lesson she has imbibed is being honest and trustworthy. She said that she has not seen a more honest and transparent organization yet. In Delhi Metro, they routinely found jewellery, bags full of valuables and cash, and other valuable documents. All CISF staff picked up valuables, documented and handed over to the Delhi Metro authorities for safe-keeping till the claimants came. No one even looked carefully at those pieces. She recounted that she has also learned how to behave in a polite and diplomatic way. As the shift in-charge, she is a team-leader, and leads a diverse group. Some members are much older than her and have long years of work experience. Working with them tactfully and also with firmness has been challenging and personally enriching. She adjusted to different people and became a more flexible and easy-going person. She said that in comparison with her friends who are teachers, she feels she is better off in CISF, as women in CISF get child care leave (CCL) easily, while teachers do not get it unless the principal is kindly disposed.

AC/Exe 'A' working in an airport for the past 05 years. She said the training she has done in CISF is one the best parts of her life. She makes it a point to learn new things on her own too, so that she stays up-to-date. Her life has been enriched by the technical training she has done. She notes that men and women get "equal chances" in training.

DC/Exe 'B'. said that she thought working in CISF was "excellent" as she has learned a lot of new things, and continues to learn and grow. The work is such that she can structure her day according to her convenience. Thus, she is able to give time to reading, writing, sports, and creative pursuits in the office campus. CISF campuses have a large variety of facilities for sports and fitness. Her work has helped in "self-improvement". She also finds participating in "Sanrakshika" activities very fulfilling.

Women helped each other on duty, during episodes of illness, during pregnancies, during the phase of breastfeeding, gave advice on financial matters, gave each other patient hearings when someone wanted to ventilate, and even planned leave turn by turn. In the same Unit, women with school-going children and those without children or ones with grown up children, planned their leave so that they could all go according to everyone's convenience. L/CT/GD 'C' used to have another L/CT 'D' as her next door neighbor in a previous Unit when both their children were very small. They took child care leave turn by turn so that one mother would be around for the children always. They both ended up saving their days of leave. 'C' said that once when she was on 'A' shift and her older son had fallen ill, her neighbor who had been on 'B' shift had taken her son to the hospital and had him treated. As a consequence, she had been late for duty. She had not distressed 'C' by telling her on duty of the little boy's illness.

Many youngster lady OR's & SO's remarked that older ladies who are appointed on compassionate ground are very helpful and supportive. They always tell the younger ones to save for a rainy day and not spend money recklessly. They are also good advisors when younger women have trouble with husbands or in-laws.

Insp/Exe 'M' who is a certified screener and works in an airport, said that women from other agencies working in an airport all network and help one another on duty. They teach newcomers tips, and help when someone feels unwell on duty. During stressful days, they catch up on gossip and jokes to bust stress and make the shift easier to bear.

Women working in CISF have found working here personally enriching and have integrated themselves with the fabric of the organization in a delightful way. They are esteemed team members as well as students of life who give back much more than their mandate. Their contributions to the growth of CISF are like

the intricate embroidery on the body of an exquisite shawl or sari. The women of CISF are exemplary professionals and deserve a standing ovation.

Source:

1. CISF HQ Recruitment Branch archives, New Delhi.
2. Comdt./PRO CISF HQ archives, New Delhi.

Kalpana, Ph.D. " Working/ Role of women in CISF." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 04, 2019, pp. 01-04.