

Women Participation in Police Force: A Study of Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal

Dr. Ananya Chakraborty¹

Dr. Mrinalini Banerjee²

Abstract

Ensuring the participation of women in the formal sector is still an uphill task. The challenge is greater when talking about recruiting more women to the police force. The challenges are undoubtedly located in the way police forces are perceived by the masses, as well as the lack of awareness of the employability factors involved in such a job. In June 2021, the Ministry of Home Affairs sent a letter to the DGP's of all States and Union Territories reiterating one of the directions/suggestions by the "230th Report of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs". It even spoke of holding special recruitment drives to increase the number of women in the police force to at least to 33%. Since then more than a year has passed. The paper will give a general overview of the requirement to have more women in the police force. Thereafter it will focus on the significant international and domestic legal interventions to ensure more participation of women. The paper will then focus on only three states in eastern India, to see how far they have been able to ensure/encourage the representation of women in the police force. The paper will basically argue that apart from the government directives, it is essential to create awareness among the youth and encourage more women to join the police forces. The paper will then conclude with suggestions specifically to ensure involvement of women in the police force.

Keywords: *women; police; access to justice; human rights; employment.*

¹ Associate Professor, National Law University Odisha

² Assistant Professor of Law, National Law University Odisha.

I. Introduction

The paper primarily focuses on the efforts that have been made mostly in the past few years about ensuring more female participation in the police force. Before we delve into the particular query, it is important to understand why are we talking about female participation only. The fact is that the “230th Report of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs” suggested holding special recruitment drives to see that gradually we can at least ensure 33% of women's participation in the police force.³ The Committee noted that women's participation in the police force has been about 10.30% of the entire police force. This low representation of females in the police force is a reality in several other countries. The paper focuses on only three states, i.e., Odisha; West Bengal; and Jharkhand, as the representation of women in the police force in these is 10.01%; 9.71%; and 7.14% respectively. The reason behind selecting these three states is that they are located in the eastern part of India, and they have very low participation of females in the police force.⁴

On the other hand, we need to keep in mind that crimes against women have been on the rise in recent times. Women face different kinds of gender-based violence across jurisdictions.⁵The National Crime Records Bureau, in its ‘Crime in India-Report 2021’⁶ mentions that there has been an increase of crimes against women by 15.3% over 2020 records. Most of these crimes reported have been reported under the following heads, i.e. cruelty by husband or his relatives; assault on women with the intention to outrage modesty; kidnapping and abduction; and

³Rajya Sabha Committee, File Report,[pg 20-21]available at:https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/Committee_site/Committee_File/ReportFile/15/143/230_2021_3_14.pdf(Visited On March 10, 2023).

⁴Ibid; , Women Make Up Only 12 of India's Police Force, available at:<https://www.thehindu.com/data/women-make-up-only-12-of-indias-police-force/article61424612.ece>(Visited On March 10, 2023).

⁵Frequently asked questions: Types of violence against women and girls, available at:<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence>(Visited On March 10, 2023).

⁶NCRB, Snapshots States, available at:<https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII-2021/CII%202021%20SNAPSHOTS%20STATES.pdf>(Visited On March 10, 2023).

rape.⁷ “The crime rate registered per lakh women population is 64.5 in 2021 in comparison with 56.5 in 2020.”⁸ The data clearly shows a rise in the number of crimes committed against women, making it important to create more woman-friendly police, which will help in both preventing; investigating, and prosecuting such crimes. One way of ensuring better support from the police to the women victims will be to recruit more women in the police force and impart them the skills to handle these cases.

Crimes against women in Jharkhand have been on the rise.⁹ In 2021, the state witnessed a rise, by almost 17%, in incidents of rape compared to what was reported in 2020. Some of the rape incidents were perpetrated by police personnel themselves.¹⁰ The crimes reported showcase that women have been facing rising violence both inside and outside of their households.¹¹ A glance at the data available on crimes against women in West Bengal in recent times shows an increase in violence against women by their spouses, and their relatives in 2021,

⁷NCRB, Snapshots States, *available at*:<https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII-2021/CII%202021%20SNAPSHOTS%20STATES.pdf>(Visited On March 10, 2023). [Table – 3A.2]

⁸NCRB, Snapshots States, *available at*:<https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII-2021/CII%202021%20SNAPSHOTS%20STATES.pdf>(Visited On March 12, 2023).

⁹ State Registers 17 Rise In Rape Cases Since 2020 NCRB, *available at*:<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/state-registers-17-rise-in-rape-cases-since-2020-ncrb/articleshow/90886734.cms>(Visited On March 12, 2023).

¹⁰ ETV Bharat, Cases Of Crime Against Women And Girls Increased In Jharkhand, *available at*:<https://www.etvbharat.com/english/national/bharat/cases-of-crime-against-women-and-girls-increased-in-jharkhand/na20221009222837615615750>(Visited On March 12, 2023).

¹¹Anant Kumar, “Violence Against Women In Jharkhand: Issues, Challenges, And Way Forward”, MOJ Women’s Health, 2019,*available at*:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339787342_Violence_against_women_in_Jharkhand_Issues_challenges_and_way_forward(Visited On March 12, 2023); Susmita Bharati, “Domestic violence against women in Jharkhand”, International Journal of Current Research Vol. 7, Issue, 01, pp.11748-11752, January 2015, *available at*:<https://www.journalcra.com/sites/default/files/issue-pdf/7142.pdf>(Visited On March 23, 2023). JAGORI, “Study on Violence Against Women in Public Spaces in Ranchi and Hazaribag, Jharkhand A Synopsis” April 2016, *available at*:https://www.jagori.org/sites/default/files/publication/Summary%20findings%20%28Ranchi%20%26%20Hazaribag%29%20English_0.pdf(Visited On March 12, 2023).

as per NCRB data.¹² According to the NCRB report West Bengal and Odisha saw the most increase in crimes against women in 2020 compared to 2019.¹³ Odisha witnessed a 23% rise in crimes against women, like in cases of rape, abduction, and domestic violence in 2021.¹⁴ Odisha has topped in cases of assault or use of criminal force on women with intent to disrobe” as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2020.¹⁵ NCRB data shows that 98.6% of women-related cases were still pending trial, making it the highest in the country, and the conviction rate was only 8.3%, against the national average of 26.6%.¹⁶

The above-mentioned information showcases the magnitude of the problem of crimes against women in these three States, and the importance of the role of police in dealing with these cases, which makes it important for these States to include more women in the police force.

The paper has structured into two folds. In the first phase the authors have analyzed the definition of police and its position in India. The authors further delved into understanding the role of women in police. In the second phase the authors have conducted a secondary data analysis of women representation in 3 states (West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand) wherein the findings state that there is drastically less number of women representation in the police force. While

¹² West Bengal reports highest domestic violence cases by husband, in-laws: NCRB, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/west-bengal-reports-highest-domestic-violence-cases-by-husband-in-laws-ncrb-101661870434326.html>(Visited On March 12, 2023).

¹³The Quint, Crimes Against Women Increase In West Bengal and Orissa: NCRB Data, <https://www.thequint.com/news/crimes-against-women-increase-in-west-bengal-odisha-ncrb-data>(Visited On March 13, 2023).

¹⁴Daily Pioneer, Rise In Crimes Against Women in Odisha, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/state-editions/23--rise-in-crimes-against-women-in-odisha.html>(Visited On March 13, 2023).

¹⁵Debabrata Mohanty, Hindustan Times, Odisha tops in cases of assault on women with intent to disrobe: NCRB, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/odisha-tops-in-cases-of-assault-on-women-with-intent-to-disrobe-ncrb-101631769486422.html>(Visited On March 13, 2023).

¹⁶Daily Pioneer, 23% rise in crimes against women in Odisha, Wednesday, 31 August 2022, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/state-editions/23--rise-in-crimes-against-women-in-odisha.html>(Visited On March 13, 2023).

deriving the findings the authors have provided a comparative study of the available resources for women in the police force.

II. Policing and Its Position in India

As per the dictionary meaning of the term “Police”, it means an official organization that is responsible for “*protecting people and property, making people obey the law, finding out about and solving crime, and catching people who have committed a crime.*”¹⁷ it includes the people who work for this organization.¹⁸ As evident from the definition of the term, it is a state-run institution with the primary function to maintain law and order in any society. The state uses the police to maintain law and order, and facilitate other institutions to conduct affairs in a smooth way. Policing undoubtedly is in essence a crucial element in realizing *access to justice*.

In our constitutional framework, ‘Police’ is placed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which means that State legislatures can enact laws on the same. States fundamentally rest on three pillars, i.e., Legislature; Executive; and Judiciary. The police force performs the core functions of an executive under several legislations, like *The Police Act*¹⁹; *the Indian Police Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954*²⁰; *Code of Criminal Procedure*²¹; *the Indian Penal Code*²²; and a number of state legislations. Twenty-nine Indian states have their

¹⁷Cambridge Dictionary, Police, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/police>(Visited On March 13, 2023).

¹⁸Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/police_1#:~:text=%2Fp%2Fp%2Fp%2Fp%2F,who%20work%20for%20this%20organization (Visited On March 23, 2023).

¹⁹The Police Act, 1861 (Act 5 of 1861) https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/police_act_1861.pdf(Visited On March 13, 2023).

²⁰The Indian Police Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954, https://dopt.gov.in/sites/default/files/Revised_AIS_Rule_Vol_III_IPS_Rule_01.pdf(Visited On March 13, 2023).

²¹Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, *available at*: <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1974-02.pdf>(Visited on March 13, 2023).

²²The Indian Penal Code, 1860, <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1860-45.pdf>(Visited on March 13, 2023).

own police forces²³, while the Central government maintains seven central police forces and some other police organizations for specialized tasks such as intelligence gathering, investigation, research and record-keeping, and training.²⁴ Both Central and State governments spend around 3% of their budget on police forces.

State police are divided into two sections, i.e., civil and armed police, where the former is responsible for maintaining day-to-day law and order and controlling crimes.

The police force in India is an overburdened force, and as per the ‘Police Reforms in India’²⁵ report in the year 2017, crime per lakh population has increased by 28%, but convictions have been low. In addition to the workload, the police force still has a lot of vacancies. Bureau of Police Research and Development in its report speaks of the police-population ratio, and it shows that there has been a marginal increase percentage-wise in the sanctioned police strength of our country.²⁶ In 2007 it was observed that the actual availability of Policemen gets further reduced owing to vacancies running up to 16.58%.²⁷ The police per lakh of Population Ratio against the total sanctioned Police strength during the year 2021 was 196.23 as compared to 193.95 in the previous year, which is a slight

²³For example, The Police Forces in Maharashtra and Gujarat are governed by the Bombay Police Act of 1951; Kerala by the Kerala Police Act of 1960; Karnataka by the Karnataka Police Act of 1963; The Police Act 1888 (Odisha) and Delhi by the Delhi Police Act of 1978

²⁴ PRS India, Police Reforms In India, *available at*:<https://prsindia.org/policy/analytical-reports/police-reforms-india>(Visited On March 14, 2023).

²⁵Anviti Chaturvedi, Police Reforms In India, 2017, https://prsindia.org/files/policy/policy_analytical_reports/Police%20Reforms%20in%20India.pdf(Visited On March 14, 2023).

²⁶Data On Police Organizations, Page 1, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/8519123491-Data%20on%20Police%20Organisations.pdf> (Visited On March 14, 2023). ,

²⁷Data On Police Organizations, Page 1, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/8519123491-Data%20on%20Police%20Organisations.pdf>(Visited On March 14, 2023). ,

improvement.²⁸ The population Per Police Person against the total sanctioned Police strength during the year 2021 was 509.62 as compared to 515.59 in the previous year, which again is an improvement.²⁹ The data on State/UTs-wise population per police person in the 2022 report, shows that the population per police person in Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand was 676.78; 622.03; and 467.83 respectively. The data on State/ UTs wise total police per lakh of population in the 2022 report, shows that the total police per lakh of population in Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand was 147.76; 160.7; and 213.75 respectively. The above-mentioned data shows that there is a need to reform the police forces across the states. In March 2021, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kisha Reddy informed the Lok Sabha that the sanctioned strength of police was 26,23,225 while the actual strength was 20,91,488, and 5,31,737 vacancies were there as on January 1, 2020.³⁰ We can conclusively say that the police force in India needs a lot of reform, and it definitely needs to incorporate more women in the force for maintaining better law and order.

Before we dwell further on the issue of having more women in the police force, it is important to understand that in the existing structure, the State governments directly recruit police personnel in the ranks of Constables, Sub-Inspectors, and Deputy SPs. While the central government recruits Indian Police Service (IPS) officers for the rank of Assistant SP. Police forces carry out different kinds of functions³¹. The efficiency of police forces in crime prevention and response is

²⁸Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Data On Police Organizations (As On January 01, 2022), Bureau Of Police Research And Development, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202301110504030641146DataonPoliceOrganizations.pdf> (Visited On March 14, 2023).

²⁹Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Data On Police Organizations (As On January 01, 2022), Bureau Of Police Research And Development, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202301110504030641146DataonPoliceOrganizations.pdf> (Visited On March 14, 2023).

³⁰5.31 lakh police posts vacant in India, max in UP: Govt, Mar 16, 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/5-31-lakh-police-posts-vacant-in-india-max-in-up-govt/articleshow/81533860.cms>(Visited On March 14, 2023).

³¹(i) crime prevention and response (e.g., intelligence collection, patrolling, investigation, production of witnesses in courts), (ii) maintenance of internal security and law and order (e.g., crowd control, riot control, anti-terrorist or anti extremist operations), and (iii) various miscellaneous duties (e.g., traffic management, disaster rescue and removal of encroachments)

vital to maintain law and order, especially for the vulnerable sections of society, including women, and having a gender-sensitized force would go a long way in ensuring justice.

III. Role of Women in Police: Its Significance

It is widely believed that the participation of women in the police force can reduce the vulnerability of women against crimes. However, as per records, the women's police population ratio is still very low, resulting in serious challenges in dealing with crimes against women and women criminals.³² The percentage of Women Police was 11.75% of the Actual Strength of the total Police force in the country, as on January 2022. The actual strength of total women police was 2,46,103 as of 01.01.2022 in the country, which is an increase of 13.40%, over the strength of 2,17,026 in 2020. While the overall vacancy came to 5,95,105 against the total sanctioned strength of 26,89,938 at the national level in 2022.³³

A. International Perspectives

It is widely accepted now that state agencies must reflect diversity in terms of employment to cater to different sections of society, and recruiting more women is one of the ways. It is believed that the participation of women in all levels and roles of law enforcement, make it more responsive and reflective of the society that we live in. it enhances operational effectiveness, enhances community trust, and decreases corruption.³⁴

Public Order, Second Administrative Reforms Commission, 2007, https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/public_order5.pdf [https://prsindia.org/files/policy/policy_analytical_reports/Police%20Reforms%20in%20India.pdf](Visited On March 23, 2023).

³²Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Data On Police Organizations (As On January 01, 2022), Page 58, Bureau of Police Research And Development, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202301110504030641146DataonPoliceOrganizations.pdf> (Visited On March 15, 2023).

³³Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Data On Police Organizations (As On January 01, 2022), Page 45, Bureau Of Police Research And Development, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202301110504030641146DataonPoliceOrganizations.pdf> (Visited On March 15, 2023), Page 106-130.

³⁴Promoting Women in Law Enforcement, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/promoting-women-in-law-enforcement>(Visited On March 23, 2023).

The following five factors, according to a paper titled "Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region," promote the inclusion of more women in the police force: improved efficiency and effectiveness due to a diverse and inclusive workforce; Improved responses to sexual and gender-based violence, attaining gender equality and upholding international and national obligations, professional policing, and developing community trust and institutional legitimacy.³⁵ The study of the ASEAN region showed that the women police force ensures overall improvement in performance because of collective intellect³⁶; women are sometimes better equipped to work in close proximity to the community, enabling them to gather more information; increases positive perceptions of police legitimacy; less likely than men to use excessive force³⁷; effective at reducing the incidence of violence against women in some circumstances³⁸; encourages women and girls survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to report their experiences to the police, enabling law enforcement agencies to better respond to and combat crimes against women and children, and investigate and prosecute offenders; shows compliance with their international and national commitments towards achieving gender equality; affirms the fact that gender is not a barrier to being a good police officer.

The United Nations has also been vocal about having more women in its various peacekeeping operations while encouraging the participation of women in

³⁵Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/08/Women%20in%20Law%20Enforcement%20in%20the%20ASEAN%20Region%20Summary.pdf>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

³⁶Woolley, A. W., C. F. Chabris, A. Pentland, N. Hashmi and T. W. Malone, "Evidence for a collective intelligence factor in the performance of human groups" *Science* 330(6004): 686–688, 2010, https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/evidence_for_a_collective_intelligence_factor_in_the_performance_of_human_groups_woolley_et_al.pdf(Visited On March 15, 2023).

³⁷Louise E. Porter & Tim Prenzler, "Police officer gender and excessive force complaints: an Australian study, *Policing and Society*" 27:8, 865-883, DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2015.1114616(2017).

³⁸Miller, A. R., and C. Segal, "Do Female Officers Improve Law Enforcement Quality? Effects on Crime Reporting and Domestic Violence." *The Review of Economic Studies* 86(5)2018.

domestic police services.³⁹ The police division of the United Nations has reached an average strength of 10 percent since 2014. Female officers carry out different kinds of functions, like public order management, specialized capacities like Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), and high-risk operations.⁴⁰ Women are allowed to interact with community members. In post-conflict zones, community members are more likely to approach female officers to report sexual and gender-based violence, especially when it has been used as a method of war. The 'Policy on formed police units in United Nations peacekeeping operations'⁴¹ notes that mixed-gender units, in which at least one platoon (32 officers) is composed of female officers, have a more operational impact and as such should be prioritized for deployment. All-female-formed police units have been deployed from Bangladesh to United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in DR Congo and United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Haiti and from India to United Nations Mission in Liberia.

In 2018, the UN noted that 65% of victims of human trafficking were women and girls worldwide. For roughly four years, UN Women and the UNODC worked together to achieve a number of goals, one of which was to encourage women's leadership and engagement in law enforcement and border management. Women were found to be highly underrepresented, ranging from 6 percent in Indonesia to 20 percent in Lao PDR, despite the fact that they play a crucial role in enhancing the law and order system. This number reduces significantly in isolated areas, such as at international border crossings. With the use of convincing facts, our alliance has persuaded these nations that adding more women to the ranks of law enforcement will help the effort to combat transnational crimes, such as human trafficking..⁴²

³⁹Recruiting More Police Women, <https://police.un.org/en/recruiting-more-police-women>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴⁰Recruiting More Police Women, <https://police.un.org/en/recruiting-more-police-women>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴¹ UN Police, Peace Keeping Operations, Policy Formed Police Unites United Nations Peace Keeping Operations, 2016, <https://police.un.org/en/policy-formed-police-units-united-nations-peacekeeping-operations-2016>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴² UN Women, Asia Pacific, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/P148>

Studies on the issue of women in law enforcement agencies have shown the following outcomes, like, women officers are likely to engage in police misconduct; an increase in female officer representation lessens intimate partner homicides and cases of repeated domestic abuse; women recruits have been found to be more efficient in improving police-community relations.⁴³

The results of an INTERPOL study on women in law enforcement in the ASEAN region can help shape regional and national policy developments, institutional practises, and strategies, as well as targeted support from international partners, in order to bolster efforts to increase the number of women hired and contribute to the meaningful employment of women in law enforcement careers.⁴⁴ The study comes up with key findings and recommendations, after studying and conducting field visits across ten nations, on several heads, like Recruitment, training and capacity building; Deployment and retention; Promotion and leadership; Human resources, infrastructure, facilities, and equipment.⁴⁵ These key recommendations can give a sense of direction about the reforms that can be implemented to have greater participation of women in law enforcement agencies, for example, the police force in India.

B. Indian Perspective

The Indian police force is mostly regulated by State laws and some Central legislations. In the previous sections of this paper, the author has shown the data of women police officers in Indian police forces, and the fact that it is abysmally

ublications/2021/10/211022BLS21406%20UNW%20WLE%20Synopsisv05.pdf(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴³Erik Fritsvold , Why We Need More Women Working in Law Enforcement,, <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/women-in-law-enforcement/>(Visited On March 15, 2023); National Institute of Justice Special Report on Women in Policing: Breaking Barriers and Blazing a Path, July 2019, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴⁴Women in law enforcement in the ASEAN Region - Summary Report ,<https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/15570/file/Summary%20-%20Women%20in%20Law%20Enforcement%20in%20the%20ASEAN%20Region.pdf>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴⁵Women in law enforcement in the ASEAN Region- Summary Report, <https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/15570/file/Summary%20-%20Women%20in%20Law%20Enforcement%20in%20the%20ASEAN%20Region.pdf>(Visited On March 15, 2023).

low needs to be addressed. The Indian government has been consistently trying to increase the participation of women in police forces, and it is rooted in the several obligations that the government has under multiple international treaties and our Constitutional provisions. Under Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, the state is allowed to make special provisions for vulnerable groups, including women, and create equal opportunity in matters of public employment. These provisions, read with Article 14 of the Constitution enable the state to take effective measures to encourage more women to join the police forces. Such initiatives by the government will also be in compliance with the various obligations under the ratified international conventions, like, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, and several other conventions and treaties.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) established the 33% benchmark for women's representation in the police in 2009. In 2013, the MHA recommended that each police station have at least three female Sub-Inspectors and ten female police Constables⁴⁶. In 2015, the Ministry proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes Against Women (IUCAW) at crime-prone districts across states, which must have at least three female Sub-Inspectors⁴⁷. The administration proposed undertaking special recruiting campaigns in 2021 to ensure that, over time, at least 33% of women will serve in the police force.⁴⁸

The Bureau of Police Research and Development has been consistently holding the National Conference of Women in Police in the past few years, which has led to recommendations that can help increase the participation of women in police

⁴⁶ Advisory Women Police, MHA, <https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AdvisoryWomenPolice-290513.pdf> (Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴⁷ Special Investigative Unit for Women Govt. of India, <https://www.scribd.com/document/254905028/Special-Investigative-Unit-for-Women-Govt-of-India#> (Visited On March 15, 2023).

⁴⁸ Rajya Sabha, Committee Report File, https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/Committee_site/Committee_File/ReportFile/15/143/230_2021_3_14.pdf (Visited On March 15, 2023).

in an effective manner. Harping on the concept of 'Equality' as enshrined in the Constitution, and a range of international legal instruments⁴⁹.

In 2002, a number of observations were made under the following heads, like creating a forum for Women in the police; having training and development opportunities; having minimum facilities for women in the police, and welfare issues. In this conference a number of suggestions were made, for example, having minimum 33% representation/recruitment of women in police service; including women in all training opportunities; toilets, and restrooms for women in all police stations and units; enhanced maternity leave; redesigning uniform for comfort, climate and to suit indoor/outdoor job as well as age's; transport/vehicle for official work and family accommodation should be ensured.⁵⁰

In 2005, the conference reiterated some of the former suggestions, but with more clarity, like asking for suitably differentiated physical standards in the recruitment procedure; women officers to be included in the interview panels; common cadre for men and women in the police; entrust women police with more mainstream duties; incorporation of women as training staff; be encouraged to develop their innate skills; provide women-supportive infrastructural changes, like a creche, etc; have mechanisms for dealing with sexual harassment at the workplace; representation of senior women officers to suggest policy and procedures for induction, training, deployment, and work environment; conduct gender audit and gender budgeting for women in police.⁵¹

⁴⁹Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979; Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995; and the Outcome Document 2000; Convention on the Rights of the Child (as girl children are future policewomen in India) (CRC), 1989.

⁵⁰First National Conference for Women in police (2002), page 2, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711300447359662016112805293894017371stNCWP.pdf>(Visited On March 16, 2023).

⁵¹ Recommendations of Second National Conference for Women in Police July,2005 Mussorie, Uttrakhand, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711303820795752016112805303087765692ndNCWP.pdf>(Visited On March 16, 2023).

In 2009, the conference in addition to reaffirming the points made in the former conferences recommended the Posting of at least 4 Women Police officers in each Police station and a representative number of women officers in charge of Police stations; Equitable promotion opportunities; creation of State level forums for Women for mentoring/networking and grievance redressal purposes.⁵²

In 2010, a few new suggestions were made, like 30% reservation in every recruitment in civil Police; Women Police Officers to be considered for the posts of SHO, SDPO, and other mainstream postings; equipment for use of women police personnel to be women-specific; recommendations with regard to women in Police in Central Police Organizations/Central Para Military Forces.⁵³ In 2012, the conference added the recommendations of creating of women and child desk in each Police Station to attend to women and child complainants; posting a minimum of four women in every police station.⁵⁴ In 2014, some new recommendations were made like, increase women's representation in all states by 10% within two years, and by 30% within 10 years; to having a proportional reservation in police housing.⁵⁵

The 2016 Conference, the BPRD came up with a more detailed list of views on recommendations. The theme of the views generally asked for more consultations to be taken with different stakeholders, like the Ministry of Home Affairs; Director Generals; Directors General of CAPFs, CS Division, Police-II Division, IS Division, UT Division of MHA, and DsGP of states.⁵⁶ Some of the

⁵² Recommendations Of Third National Conference for Women in Police (2009) <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711311584865272016112805312169016463rdNCWP.pdf> (Visited on March 16, 2023).

⁵³ Recommendations of 4thNational Conference for Women in Police held at Bhubaneswar, From 15-17 September,2010,<https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711314625489372016112805321029959064thNCWP.pdf>(Visited On March 16, 2023).

⁵⁴Recommendations Of 5thNational Conference For Women In Police July 25 -27, 2012, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711321162982522016112805324594016605thNCWP.pdf> (Visited On March 16, 2023).

⁵⁵6thNational Conference of Women in Police, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/2016120711324122357952016112805332234641256thNCWP.pdf>(Visited On March 16, 2023).

⁵⁶'Summing up Report of 7th National Conference of Women in Police', *available at:* (Visited On March 16, 2023).

major recommendations to have more women police officers were, like, having a Syncretic Recruitment Scheme to induce gender balance in hiring patterns; 20% of women to be members of all specialized forces; investing more in advertisements of recruitment opportunities; 10% of training slots in professional courses to be reserved for women; more women SHOs to be posted in All Women Police Stations and police stations located in conflict zones; minimum five women personnel to be posted in each police station in conflict zones, where they can be utilized as advisors, monitors, arbitrators. Liaison officers, and for verification of data, and several more.⁵⁷

There has been consistent dialogue between different stakeholders about increasing participation of women across all ranks in the police force, and ensuring that they are given a supportive environment to continue in service, once they are part of it.

IV. Women Participation in Police Force in India: Odisha; West Bengal; Jharkhand

In this part of the paper, we will see the kind of efforts made in these three states to increase the participation of women in the police force, the impact it has made, and what can be done to increase their participation. There were 2,17,026 women officers in India's police as of January 01, 2021.

A. Odisha

Odisha has taken a few steps to have women in the police force, as per the time-to-time recommendations. Some initiatives are like having:

- i. '*Mahila Desks*' at all regular Police Stations with a designated Desk Officer and an Assistant, to deal exclusively with women-related cases;

[<https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/201612071142561923250Recommendationsof7thNCWP.pdf>]

⁵⁷ Summingup Report of 7th National Conference of Women in Police, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/201612071142561923250Recommendationsof7thNCWP.pdf>(Visited On March 16, 2023).

ii. '*Mahila Police Stations*', each headed by a woman inspector, having jurisdiction over women-related cases, and also providing counseling services in cases of marital discord;

iii. Under '*Women Empowerment & Gender Sensitive Policing*' (WE-GSP), a dedicated team of The Police Commissioner has appointed Women Special Police Officers on an honorary basis pursuant to Section 13 of the Odisha Urban Police Act 2003. They are subject to the same obligations and are given the same rights, privileges, and immunities as regular police officers. A total of 297 SPOs have been enrolled, subject to the same disciplinary control, just as ordinary police officers, with the objective of expanding our information base regarding crime against women.

iv. Women are also used as Student Traffic Volunteers

At present, there are only six Mahila Police stations in Odisha.⁵⁸

In spite of these initiatives the total strength of women in Odisha police is only 10% as per BPRD. There have been consistent promises on behalf of the Odisha Government towards securing 33% reservation for women in government jobs. However, the specific laws⁵⁹ that govern the different police forces in Odisha don't make any specific reference to such reservation.

Therefore, in realistic terms, we can say that the Odisha government has adopted a reservation policy of 30% or more for women in their police forces but has not taken the legislative path.

B. Jharkhand

Jharkhand government police website reveals that they function as per the Punjab Police Act, 2007, and in that Act, the state government:

⁵⁸ Odisha Police: Cuttack; Rourkela; Sambalpur; Berhampur; Koraput; and Bhubaneswar, :<https://www.odishapolice.gov.in/?q=node/24>(Visited On March 20, 2023).

⁵⁹The Orissa Special Armed Police Act, 1946; The Orissa Military Police Act, 1980; The Orissa Urban Police Act, 2003.

“shall provide for employment opportunities to women in the Police Service and may provide for separate physical standards for their recruitment”⁶⁰

as per the data available in the public domain there are in total 24 All women police stations in Jharkhand⁶¹, and all of them are headed by women except in a few districts. A common cadre is used to recruit both men and women. At the level of Constables in the India Reserve Battalion, Special India Reserve Battalion, and Jharkhand State Police, Jharkhand offers a 33% reservation for women.⁶² The Home, Tax, and Disaster Management Department provided reservations for women in the India reserve Battalion.⁶³ The Special India Reserve Battalion received a 33% reservation for women according to the Home Department..⁶⁴ The Home, Tax, and Disaster Management Department provided for reservation of women for the Police Radio Operators Post.⁶⁵

C. West Bengal

As per the latest data, there is a total of 40 women police stations across West Bengal.⁶⁶ In April 2022, it was announced that specialized women police force in every district and Commissionerate’s of the state will be formed to increase the security of women.⁶⁷ As many as 4,000 trained women will be appointed for at

⁶⁰Punjab Police Act, 2007, Section 4 (f).

⁶¹Bokaro, Chaibasa, Chatra, Deoghar, Dhanbad, Dumka, Garwah, Giridih, Godda, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Jamshepur, Jamtara, Khunti, Koderma, Latehar, Lohardaga, Pakur, Palamu, Ramgarh, Ranchi, Sahebganj, Saraikella and Simdega. Women Police, Jharkhand, [at:https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand](https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand)(Visited On March 23, 2023).

⁶² Notification number 6992 dated 20 October 2014, <https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand>(Visited on March 20, 2023).

⁶³Notification Number 16-No-10/2015 3875 dated 14th July 2016, [at:https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand](https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand)(Visited on March 20, 2023).

⁶⁴ Notification no 16-R.B -14/2015 3667 dated 15 June 2015, <https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand>(Visited On March 20, 2023).

⁶⁵Notification Number 16/02/2016 3453 dated 14th June 2017, <https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/jharkhand>(Visited On March 20, 2023).

⁶⁶West Bengal, Women Police, https://wbpolice.gov.in/wbp/Common/WBP_WomenPolice.aspx(Visited On March 20, 2023).

⁶⁷ ‘Bengal to form specialized women police force in every district’ 7th April 2022, [at:https://theprint.in/india/bengal-to-form-specialised-women-police-force-in-every-district/905900/](https://theprint.in/india/bengal-to-form-specialised-women-police-force-in-every-district/905900/) (Visited On March 23, 2023).

least 150 battalions which will be initially set up for the purpose.⁶⁸ However there is no legislative provision to provide reservations for women in police. Some other measure which has seen success is creating 'Winners', all-women squads in Kolkata and other police Commissionerate's, and some police districts in West Bengal.⁶⁹

From the above-mentioned portion it is clear that there are no proper legislative guarantees for the reservation of women in the police force. Sometimes as in the case of Jharkhand, there may be notifications of reservations, however, they are barely traceable or shared in a public manner. All three states have different methods of increasing women's participation in the police force. It is safe to say that for more than a decade the conversation about increasing women's participation has been in the language of recommendations and advisories. One of the reasons for the same is that the police still remain a state subject under the constitution, making them tailor mechanisms to suit their specific needs. The three states however do show an interest in making steady progress in increasing the recruitment of women in their police force.

V. Conclusion

Women's participation in the police force or for that matter in government services needs more than reservations, however, reservations in jobs do give an increased impetus towards reaching the goals. To have greater participation of women in police needs a holistic approach in a predominantly patriarchal society. Especially post-pandemic the situation for the girl child has worsened given the higher dropout rates from schools and the increase in child marriage. The recruitment of women into police is a matter connected with giving women a sense of empowerment, especially given that they will be law enforcement officers. The entire objectivity behind having women in the police force must not be restricted only to the idea of handling women-specific crimes, because that

⁶⁸ 'Bengal to form specialized women police force in every district' 7th April 2022, <https://theprint.in/india/bengal-to-form-specialised-women-police-force-in-every-district/905900/>(Visited On March 23, 2023).

⁶⁹ Women Cops To Be Hired For Winners Team, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/my-kolkata/news/2020-women-cops-to-be-hired-for-winners-team/cid/1867070>(Visited On March 23, 2023).

will kind of restrict their skills. That may be an important objective, however, women need to be treated equally, and opportunities need to be created for all kinds of services that police forces are engaged in. The recruitment process doesn't start from advertisements or notifications, rather it begins when a woman is empowered, or even made aware of the opportunities for employment in the police force. Therefore, some programs can be to generate more curiosity, and awareness among school-going girl children may be taken. Such programs will help them in making them aware citizens and aspire to dream to become law enforcement officers. It also will make them more aware of the inequalities they face inside and outside family spaces. Such programs must not be restricted to only urban areas, and rural areas should be given equal importance.

The other steps which must be taken to ensure that women continue in the police force once they join it, is States take adequate measures to implement the recommendations that are given from time to time, and it can be done by more budget allocation on the same.

To conclude it can be said that the goal of increasing women's participation in the police force is dependent on several factors, and all the stakeholders need to act together to the best of their abilities, and resources to make this dream a reality.