



THE FEMALE SOLDIER: NEED TO INDUCT WOMEN INTO COMBAT ROLES IN THE INDIAN ARMY

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“The question isn’t who’s going to let me; it’s who’s going to stop me.”- Ayn Rand

Women have been a fundamental part of many armies across the globe since the early 1700s and have been involved ever since. Females participated in wars and battles providing medical or technical support and the focus shifted when large numbers of men were called away for the multiple wars that were being waged everywhere. Women were then put in the position where they had to take up combat support roles to assist in the warfare. They may not have been recognized as official members of the army but they have been valuable nonetheless.

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE INDIAN ARMY

Women have been a part of the Indian Army since 1888 when the ‘Indian Military Nursing Service’ was formed under the British Raj. British Indian Army nurses participated in WWI and WWII. It was only in 1942 that the Women’s Auxillary Corps (India) was formed and women participated as telephone, teleprinter and cipher operators. For decades, women were restricted to serve only in the medical fields.

In 1992, pursuant to the power conferred by Section 12 of the Army Act, 1950¹, the

Government started its Special Entry Scheme (SES) for women and they were inducted into the Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Postal Services and Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) followed by the Army Education Corps (AEC) and the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Branch. The scheme was initially approved for a period of five years only.

Women started receiving formal education in technical fields and eventually in 1996, they were allowed to apply for the technical arms i.e. Corps of Engineers (Engrs.), Army Air Defence (AAD), Corps of Electronic and Mechanical Engineers (EME), the Regiment of Artillery and the Intelligence Corps (Int.). Women were not allowed entry into the combat arms such as the Armoured Corps, Infantry and Mechanised Infantry.

Females serving in the non- medical cadre served as Short Service Commissioned (SSC) officers where they were allowed to serve for a period of five years, extendable by five years with a final extension of four years.

In February 2003, Babita Puniya filed a Writ Petition² in the Delhi HC seeking the grant of Permanent Commission (PC) to serving women SSC officers. In 2006, the grant was issued to those women officers and they were given the option of moving under the new SSC scheme of service for ten years, extendable by four years or of continuing under the previous scheme. The pre-commission training period for women was subsequently increased from 24 weeks to 49 weeks so as to make them undergo the same training as their male counterparts.

In 2008, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) granted PCs to prospectively SSC women

¹Section 12- Ineligibility of females for enrolment or employment.- No female shall be eligible for enrolment or employment in the regular Army, except in such corps, department, branch or other body forming part of, or attached to any portion of, the

regular Army as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify in this behalf

² WP (C) 1597 of 2003



officers in the AEC and JAG departments. This was challenged by Major Sandhya Yadav on the grounds that it only granted PCs prospectively and only to certain cadres. The HC replied that the matters of induction and operations were outside the purview of the court and that it was a policy matter so the benefits would be given only to those women officers in service who had come before the court or retired during the pendency of the proceedings³.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The MoD rolled out a new policy in 2019 that allowed women to be eligible for PCs in eight other streams in addition to the AEC and JAG branch. However, they were eligible only for Staff Appointments and not for commanding roles. There were a lot of other restrictions in the same policy, the opportunities were limited and women were not on an equal footing with their male counterparts. It was a requirement to serve for a minimum of 20 years to be liable to receive pension benefits but women officers were excluded from receiving pension and retirements benefits even after serving for their full stipulated tenure of 14 years.

The policy was starkly sexist for it did not provide the same benefits to women as it did to their male counterparts with illogical gender based biases limiting the scope of opportunities for women and the Hon'ble SC pointed out these discriminatory terms of the policy. In a landmark judgement⁴ in February 2020, the SC reaffirmed the Right to Equal Opportunity⁵ guaranteed to all female officers by lifting all restrictions on appointments. The court paved way for female officers to serve in command

appointments and not just staff appointments in eight streams of the Army barring the combat role. This decision opened doors for women to serve in the Army until retirement and in the combat- support arms and Services division of the army while getting the same benefits, pensions and ranks as their male counterparts.

In March 2020, the physical standard for women officers was revised by the MoD. The new guidelines required them to complete new Physical Proficiency Tests (PPT) and a mandatory Junior Command (JC) course at War College in Mhow to be eligible to apply for PC. The Army's Directorate of Military Training also envisaged a new Basic Physical Efficiency Test (BPEPT) which includes a 5-km run, a 60m sprint, climbing vertical rope, traversing horizontal rope and a 6ft trench. BPEPT is a series of physical tests that is conducted regularly to keep the physical fitness of officers and jawans in check. It is a continuous routine that is in place to ensure physical efficiency. The Army has now made BPEPT mandatory for all female officers, something they were excluded from initially. In 2011, women officers commissioned before 2009 and above the age of 35 were exempted from performing BPEPT and PPT but that has been reversed now as well.

As of July, 2020, women officers have planned to approach the SC questioning these new physical standards and tests saying that it was unfair and unjust to introduce these tests for women who have already completed 14 years of service and are above 35 years of age. The view is that the new standards have been laid down without conducting any study and is an attempt to prevent serving women SSC officers from receiving PC. These

³https://main.sci.gov.in/supremecourt/2010/20695/20695_2010_8_1501_20635_Judgement_17-Feb-2020.pdf

⁴ MANU/ SC/ 0194/ 2020

⁵ Art. 16, Constitution of India, 1950



women are being asked to complete course that one takes as a Major while already being a Lt. Col. It is a welcomed move to apply these revised rules prospectively but to raise physical standards equal to that of men without actually permitting them to apply for all roles as their male counterparts does seem out of place.

The debate was never male vs. female, it was about securing equal rights and the SC upheld rights give under Article 14 and Article 15 by granting parity to women officers with their male counterparts. The challenges that come with this right are something that women need to brace and prepare for. Equal rights also means no concessions or pardons and that they will be put at the same level as men in every way. But equality also means freedom to apply for combat roles as well.

This move by the Apex Court was a win, not just for women aspiring to join the Armed Forces but also for society as a whole. It was a step towards gender equality and integration. However, the question of including women in combat roles was still left unanswered.

HESITATION TO INCLUDE WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

Very few countries have broken the gender barrier and have allowed women to take up combat roles in the army. The road to gender integration in the military has been tough but many countries have succeeded. India has one of the largest armies in the world and it resisted the introduction by citing concern over women's vulnerability. The view is that a woman might not have the mental and physical ability to cope with the stress of being on the front lines. Other reasons

include the societal burdens and obligations, spousal postings, hygiene and housing factors and general outlook of men.⁶

Mr. Pranab Mukherjee rightly said⁷, "In our country 'Shakti', which means power, is a manifestation of female energy. This Shakti defines our strength." Fierce females have always been a part of history; they have brandished swords and guns to fight off the enemy. India remembers its great warriors like Ashoka, Harshavardhan and Prithviraj Chauhan but somewhere we forgot our female revolutionaries. They were daughters, wives, mothers and sisters who valiantly fought off royalty and men to keep the integrity of their land. The truth is that there are numerous accounts throughout history establishing the fact that women have been instrumental and intrinsically involved in war.

HISTORY OF FEMALE WARRIORS IN INDIA

The first record of a female warrior dates back to half a century before Rani Laxmi Bai when Kittur Rani Chenamma ruled the land. The Doctrine of Lapse was introduced and when the Britishers vehemently tried to annex Kittur, she gallantly fought them and eventually killed John Thackery. Keladi Chenamma defeated Aurangzeb's army on the battlefield which resulted in her kingdom being recognised as an independent kingdom. Onakka Obavva was not of royal descent but was the wife of a guard at the Chitradurga Fort. She took matters into her own hands and killed almost 100 of Hyder Ali's men who were trying to sneak into the fort. Rani Abakka resisted and fought fiercely against the Portuguese, gaining the name Rani Abhaya. Rani Velu Nachiyar was a woman of

⁶<http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/women-officers-in-the-indian-army-a-reality-check/0/>

⁷<https://in.reuters.com/article/india-women-military/indian-armed-forces-to-recruit-women-for-all-combat-roles-president-idINKCN0VX1PQ>



Tamil origin who held her kingdom for almost 10 years with her army of women despite constant attacks by the British. Rani Rudramma Devi took over the reins of the Kakatiya Dynasty when there were no men and fiercely battled the Pandyas, Cholas and the Yadavas. Belawadi Mallamma is credited with being the first queen in the history of the Indian subcontinent to have trained and raised an all women army back in the 17th century. She battled heroically against the Maratha army to save her kingdom and was later released by Chatrapati Sivaji for her bravery. During the revolt of 1857, our history textbooks fail to mention Rani Draupadi, the queen of Dhar who attacked the Sardarpur cantonment and returned with the loot causing the British army to get nervous. Rani Avantibai was the wife of King Vikramjeet Singh and the queen of Ramgarh. She took over the position of head when the king fell sick and valiantly fought off the British army with her troop at Kheri. Jhalkaribai was a part of Rani Laxmi Bai's army and was also the advisor to the queen. Since they looked similar, she took position at the centre of the battlefield, giving Rani Laxmi Bai the opportunity to escape. Uda Devi was a woman belonging to the Dalit community who, under the able leadership of Begam Hazrat Mahal, formed an army of women to fight in the battle of Sikander Bagh. Her courage resulted in the death of 40 British soldiers before she was captured.

These were just a few of the female warriors among the many who came onto the male dominated battlefield to bleed for their motherland. Our history has been crafted by women who have fought and died in war. Women have been accepted as commanders and leaders back in the 1800s if we were to disregard gender roles and norms, patriotism is intrinsic.

Somewhere down the line, during and after colonization, the Indian society forgot the value of women in every field and she became an object to be hidden away behind doors. Her spirit, intelligence, abilities and strength was reduced to a mere nothingness. It was a long journey from there to much later in the future where women began to stand up and fight for their social, economic, political and civil rights. Confidence was regained and women were reminded of everything they were capable of achieving, if given the opportunity. Women have repeatedly proven themselves to be valuable assets in every field they have ventured into, be it sports, science, arts, politics or academics. They have been in positions of power and have shown excellent results while donning familial roles simultaneously.

Women need only a chance to show what they are capable of. Lt. Col. Mitali Madhumita was the first woman officer to be awarded the Sena Medal in 2011 for her bravery shown during the attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul. Captain Divya Ajith Kumar was the first female officer to receive the prestigious Sword of Honour and also lead the all women contingent of 154 women officers and cadets during the 2015 Republic Day Parade. Dr. Seema Rao, also known as 'India's Wonder Woman' was the first female commando trainer who has trained over 15,000 Special Forces. Women demonstrated their competence in all professional fields and it was only a matter of time before the society was made aware of benefits they would incur if they lifted all barriers against women.

Until recently, there were no female fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force. In 2016, the IAF took in 3 female fighter pilots on an experimental basis. After evaluation, Flt. Lt. Avani Chaturvedi, Flt. Lt. Bhawana Kanth



and Flt. Lt. Mohana Singh were made an official part of IAF's fighter squadron for their exemplary performance and as of 2019, 8 more female fighter pilots were inducted. In 2019, a 24 year old female naval officer, Sub. Lt. Shivangi was inducted as the first maritime reconnaissance pilot. Consequently, women also gained clearance to join the Military Police. This only goes to highlight the Army's strong resistance to include women in combat roles and the concept of patriarchy that is deeply ingrained as compared to the other forces.

OBJECTIONS TO HAVING WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

Although there has been considerable talk to include women in combat roles⁸, there are fundamental objections raised for the same. It still continues to be an idea stuck in the pipeline because of the following concerns:

- Physical capabilities: the general notion is that the physical prowess of a woman is not adequate for combat. War is synonymous with physical strength and women are considered to have very little of it. It is to be noted that men who get enlisted into the army are not born with that heroic strength; they undergo hours of training and extensive conditioning to reach that level of fitness and dexterity. Where does it say that females cannot be subjected to the same? Women recruits can be trained the same way as men right from academy induction. All the female wrestlers⁹ the country has seen are outcomes of appropriate conditioning, rigorous training, fitting dietary regimes and dedication. They have shown results which are proof of the fact that it can be done, that it is very much possible for women to build muscle and strength. Women have

tremendous scope to build endurance and tolerate pain. We see female labourers toil through the day under scorching sun and all sorts of weather conditions just as much as male labourers, sometimes with a baby tied to their back. It would be wrong to limit an entire section of the population based on gender generalizations and physical strength of a person should in no way be restricted to their gender.

- Organisational difficulties: in peace stations, there are adequate facilities and suitable arrangements for women officers. However, in difficult terrains it is not the same. For example, in Siachen, there are some posts with bunkers that are just big enough for five men to huddle up. In extreme places, basic amenities like bathrooms are not available. War often requires close proximity with soldiers and this is not something that falls under the recognized norms for a woman in today's society. Firstly, this kind of primitive thinking has always prevented organisations from exploring their full potential. Societal notions cannot be the guidelines for setting standards when it comes to matters of employment. Secondly, something as trivial as organisational technicalities cannot be the reason for not allowing women on the front lines. Dynamic and proactive policies, adequate funding and sufficient time is all that is required to mandate and finance the construction of suitable facilities for female personnel. Multiple armies across the world have formulated appropriate policies to deal with all difficulties that came with this gender inclusion.
- Capture and torture: even in the 21st century, society is unprepared to deal with a woman being captured by the enemy. Capture during war is a natural phenomenon and women who

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sakshi Malik, Geeta Phogat, Nirmala Devi, Navjot Kaur, Babita Kumari, Alka Tomar



champion the right to undertake combat roles are aware of the same. The sanctity of a woman's body seems to be dictated by society's philosophies, without any regard to her opinions about the topic. Women's groups have desperately fought for equality and liberation from the cultural obligation of being forced to stay in 'safe and secure' environments in their professions merely because of their gender. The society is still back tracked by old fashioned gender roles to actually allow women to make their own decisions. The disparity between male and female personnel will continue to exist until the disparity for their safety does. The safety of a male soldier is just as important as that of a female one and the real cause for discomfort and outrage should be the capture of any soldier, irrespective of the gender.

- Domestic obligations: women have the domestic obligation of rearing a child or of taking care of a family. A woman officer need not be forced to choose between having domestic life and progressing in her military career. Women should still have the option for opting for combat roles simply because it is their choice to have a family or not. It is simple to handle such an issue with the right policies in place. For e.g. The Washington Army National Guard came up with the progressive idea of setting up a policy where women do not have to forsake their military career entirely to have a child. Promotions and rankings were delayed and appropriate post- partum physical training was provided to ensure that the personnel are ready to go back to the front lines again. Almost all professional fields have appropriate policies

in place catering to the needs of women of child bearing age.

- General outlook: the men in the troops are primarily from rural parts of the country and the Army is of the opinion that they would not be accustomed to having female counterpart alongside them on the front lines¹⁰. The chauvinism in the male soldiers will not permit them to endanger the lives of a female and this will bring down the cohesion of the unit in general¹¹. It is to be noted that the question raised during the debate of allowing women into command roles was, "will the men obey a female commanding officer?" this thought process was discarded as archaic and the ban was lifted as a step towards gender equality. It is not easy to bring about a cultural shift of this magnitude but the first step towards achieving it has to be taken nevertheless. The change will not occur until there is facilitation for the same.

The only question to be asked now is how far the Government and Defence Ministry is willing to go to get these policies in place and do the needful in exchange for the dedicated services of these brave and empowered women.

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES ACROSS THE GLOBE

Women across the globe have been a part of the military and have undertaken combat roles since the time war was conceptualised. They would disguise themselves as men to get enlisted in the army during the World Wars just to be able to fight in the war¹². Militaries had a problem initially, logistically

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51385224>

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<http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/women-officers-in-the-indian-army-a-reality-check/0/>

¹² <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/deborah-sampson>



and mentally, to get accustomed to a female soldier but with the right training both genders began to work together and showed results that most thought would be impossible.

Australia

Women have been a part of the Australian Army Nursing Service since 1899. In 1941, the Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force established a female branch allowing women to take up combat support roles. In 2013, the government decided to open all streams for women and they were allowed to take up combat roles as well. By 2014, the physical standards were determined and all policies were in place and by 2016, women had taken up positions in all frontline combat roles. Australia had its first female fighter pilot in 1988. It was their common misconception that women might not be able to perform the same way as men, physically and mentally. This was proven incorrect by the 2016-2017 ADF report which states that completion rates for women and men in initial training have been at par since 2011.¹³

USA

As millions of men were called away for the war, women's roles were drastically altered. Close to 30,000 women served in the military during WWI and 3,50,000 served in WWII. There was no policy in place that recognized them as soldiers but they participated nonetheless. After the war ended, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was enacted and women were fully recognized as member of the U.S military. Female participation grew over the decades and they were authorized to fly fighter planes

and serve on combat ships during the Gulf war. In 1994, a ban was imposed disallowing women to step into any combat roles. However this was reversed in 2013 by the Secretary of Defence. It was recognized that women were a part of war without any recognition or benefits and it was time to face that reality. Since then, women have successfully undergone and completed training for the Army and Marine Corps and women are now entering training courses for the Navy SEALs as well.¹⁴

Canada

Women were always considered to be an important part of the Canadian army. The Government opened all its military roles to women in 1989, seven years after the Charter of Rights and Freedom which was enacted in 1982. That same year the Canadian Human Rights commission gave the Forces 10 years to meet a specific quota for women employed in combat roles as a significant step towards achieving a gender equal proportion in the profession. The introduction of women into combat arms has increased the recruitment pool in the country by 100%.¹⁵ CAF men and women are treated equally in every way. They are selected for promotions, postings, and training based only on rank, qualifications and merit.

UK

In 2016, UK lifted the ban on allowing women to serve in combat roles. The government was of the belief that the army should reflect the society they live in and that combat roles should be determined based on abilities rather than gender. The opening of the roles was done in a phased and systematic manner, initially with positions in the cavalry

¹³ Commonwealth of Australia (2018), Department of Defence, <https://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/16-17/Downloads/WomenInTheADFReport2016-17.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.ourmilitary.com/women-in-combat/>

¹⁵ <https://forces.ca/en/women-in-the-caf/>



and armoured units and finally in the infantry units. They conducted basic fitness tests for infantry recruits like completing an eight mile march in less than two hours while carrying a 25 kgs backpack with gear and equipment. Different standards of tests were set for different arms and women were tested accordingly. The Defence Ministry conducted an 18 month review to set up a proper system of assessment, training and deployment.

Israel

The Israeli Defence Forces is an organisation that sets standards for all militaries across the world. Most men and women perform compulsory defence duties for reasons beyond the scope of war. In 2004, the 'Caracal' was formed with the sole objective of giving women a chance to serve in a true combat role. It was a co-ed combat battalion named after a desert cat whose gender is difficult to detect. An entry into the army did not automatically mean equal treatment but Israel holds the Caracal as proof that all women can be a part of the army. As of today, nearly 50% of Israel's lieutenants and captains are women.¹⁶

Germany

It took a case before the European Court of Justice in 2000 for the German army, Bundeshwehr, to open its doors to women taking up combat roles. A woman, Tanja Kreil felt that she was discriminated against when her application to join the forces was rejected, not because of her capabilities, but because of her gender. The Courts agreed with her and paved the way for women to take up combat positions. Since 2001, the

number of women in the German Armed Forces has tripled.¹⁷ Logistical adjustments were made to facilitate the women soldiers along with behavioural adjustments in the way male officers acted around female counterparts.

Finland

Finland took a more progressive approach to the situation where they made it a voluntary option for women to opt for combat roles. It was compulsory for men but if a woman chose the role then she was trained accordingly for combat roles, at the same level as men. There are absolutely no restrictions placed on women in the Finnish Army.¹⁸

Denmark

Denmark conceptualised a policy of 'total inclusion' where they proposed 'combat trials' to explore how a woman would fight and perform on the front lines. A study conducted in 2010 by the British Ministry of Defence¹⁹ reviewed the decision to exclude women from combat roles and the outcome of the report was that women performed the same as men. Since then all positions in the military have been open to women with equal benefits and perks.

BENEFITS OF WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

Women have constantly demonstrated their ability to be mentally, physically and emotionally capable to handle and execute combat roles and leadership positions. The debate is so focused on physical prowess that the question of whether or not women benefit the army is left ignored. The benefit of an action is sometimes seen over the course of a

¹⁶<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2013/05/16/180045066/Women-In-Combat-Lessons-From-The-Israel-Defense-Forces>

¹⁷ <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-marks-five-years-of-women-in-armed-forces/a-1842630>

¹⁸ <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/1603-proud-to-serve.html>

¹⁹<http://cmrlink.org/data/sites/85/CMRDocuments/RptOnReviewOfExclusOfWomenFromGrndClose-CombatRoles-Nov2010.pdf>



few years simply because it requires a cultural shift in the mentality as well. Only when an idea is fully accepted can it truly flourish. Some of the benefits of having women in combat roles are as follows-

- **Ability vs. Gender:** there are various instances where the applicant is capable for the post irrespective of the gender. There are lots of women who are physically and mentally more capable than the men who get recruited into the army. This assessment of calibre will provide a basis to standardize the recruitment and training requirements for women. This would also help in assessing the extra training women are required to undergo to build muscle and strength, the same way as men are trained for it.
- **Mental quickness:** it is a fact that women are more capable of multi- tasking as compared to men²⁰. They have the mental ability to quickly analyse situations and provide multiple, efficient solutions. Women can actively make judgment calls while engaging in other activities. This kind of mental skill is quite valuable on the front lines and in leadership roles when quick and important decisions have to be made.
- **Career progressions:** Widening the job opportunities for women automatically increases the number of recruits. This increases recruitment rates and allows women to reach higher positions in the forces which will further obliterate sexism. A woman will be treated with respect if she reaches a position of power based on her own skill, competence and capability.
- **Military proficiencies:** a mixed gender pool of talent in any work force acts as a breeding ground for ideas, innovations and success. If women are inducted into combat roles, they

will be trained to hone the right talents, abilities and dexterities that are required to be showcased on the front lines. Women will be treated equally if they are exposed to the same risks as men.

- **Interpersonal skills:** women are of such nature that forming relationships based on honest and mutual trust comes easily to them. This is highly resourceful when it comes to the matter of gaining intelligence. There have been reports²¹ in the Middle East that women soldiers were able to gain information which men could not merely because they were able to get the civilians to trust them and that in most countries a woman cannot talk to a man who is not her husband.
- **Sensitivity:** even when decked in gear and vests, women showcase sensitivity that does not come easily to men. This is very important to have on the front lines to maintain a sense of peace and calmness in the midst of destruction and chaos. Women are more easily trusted which makes it easier to sneak into enemy lines to gain information.
- **Pride:** every country prides itself on being a harbinger of equality and equal rights. The concept of equality remains superficial and unattained unless it is achieved in the true sense. Women have always made the nation proud in every endeavour they have undertaken and it is only a matter of pride to have women serving on the front lines. The inclusion of women in all streams of the army will actually justify this pride and give it the true meaning.
- **Cultural integration:** the main benefit of inducting women into combat roles would be the cultural shift that it would bring about in the mentality of not just the men in troops but also in the mind of the general society. The

²⁰<https://bmcpyschology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/2050-7283-1-18>

²¹washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/23/womens-rights-are-advancing-in-the-middle-east-this-explains-why/



change has to start somewhere and culture changes only over time. Almost all professional fields have been primarily male dominated until a shift was gradually brought about by including and accepting women.

CONCLUSION

There are multiple benefits that women bring to any field they work in and that includes the Armed Forces. The Supreme Court's recent decision ensures equality but more has to be done to achieve complete integration. The military builds a force and a sense of brotherhood amongst soldiers based on hyper masculinity and blood. Male supremacy is worshipped to an extent that others are considered inadequate, after all that is the mind- set of any soldier when going into war as well, to come out as supreme. This sort of conditioning is the root cause for the gender gap and is a symptom of obsolete patriarchal notions that has run our society for so many years. Women will continue to be considered as a minority until others are made to recognise them as first class soldiers, equal counterparts and not a delicate object of society. They have been a part of war since ancient times and the need for their integration has only become stronger.

In this day of political advancements and progressive thinking, it is very easy to bring about changes in a system. Every monumental revolution has been brought about by generating debate and raising questions. Women have to be included and also accepted in combat roles. The first step would be to identify the hurdles. The problems of all stakeholders must be assessed and adequate research has to be conducted before a comprehensive strategy can be formed. For any policy to be a success there has to be a free channel of communication to ensure transparency and efficiency. The easy

part of this process is the policy making, the difficult part is the massive cultural shift that has to be brought about in the mind set of men and society. It is a far- fetched hope to change society's views overnight so the first step would be to condition the men. Training programs with the objective of educating and sensitizing troops have to be initiated and continued until the troops get accustomed to the concept of a female soldier. Once the integration is truly complete in the grassroots level, it is only a matter of time before society follows.

