

**National Commission for Women in Association
With
Jnana Prabodhini Samshodhan Sanstha, Pune.**

**One day Seminar: All Women Police Station (AWPS)
'Achievements and Challenges'
Summary Of the sessions in the Seminar**

Jnana Prabodhini as an organisation works in several areas with the aim of nation building with Women empowerment/ Awakening in different sectors being one of the main. Its sister organisation- JnanaPrabodhini Samshodhan Samstha provides the research and application methods for making these efforts more concrete and validated. Its psychology wing, Prajna Manas Samshodika (Jnana Prabodhini's Institute of Psychology) and Stree Shakti Prabodhan Karyadisha group collaboratively organised a one-day seminar on '**Women Police Station: Achievements and Challenges**' on 19th November 2022 with the full financial assistance from the National Commission for Women, New Delhi.

Since the conceptualization of the seminar, the team started working on identifying suitable persons from different fields who could share their experienced views on the topic. The details of the four sessions were finalised (Schedule attached) and the speakers and panellists were contacted.

A crisp brochure was circulated for registration through google forms. The registration got an overwhelming response and around 165 persons from various fields attended the full day seminar. (list of participants and feedbacks in appendix..).

1st Session-Inaugural Seesion :Presentation of the study and experience sharing.

The session started with a motivational song 'नव्या ताकदीने नवे स्वप्न पाहू.'elaborating on women empowerment from within.

Hon. Sudhatai Kothari (Founder Member of Chaitanya Women's Association) and Hon. Pravin Dikshit, (Ret. Director General of Police, Maharashtra) inaugurated the seminar. Hon. Subhashrao Deshpande, Secretary of Jnana Prabodhini was also present there for the inauguration of the seminar.

In the first segment of the seminar, to set forth the premise of the seminar through her introduction, Dr. Anagha Lavalekar, Director of Jnana Prabodhini Samshodhan Sanstha, mentioned the work of women empowerment undertaken by Jnana Prabodhini and also the next 10 years vision statement for the same. Awareness building and empowerment in urban and rural areas been the two main wheels of this work. Safety and security issues of women need to be seriously attended by society and state machinery. She said this issues range from dowry killings to honour killings and most of them falling in the category of family violence. Considering family as the basic foundation of society this is really disturbing. Government has been trying to overcome these issues by appointing lady officer in every police station but the functionality needs to be cross checked. The number of female police officers in Maharashtra is not more than 10% leading to availability of such desk officers at the time of emergency. She also gave a background of the history regarding Mahila Police Thana in India. The first one was inaugurated in 1983 by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Later revoked in Chennai in 1992 by then chief minister, Jai Lalitha. Today India has more than 500

Mahila Police Thana. She mentioned the initiative taken by National commission for Women on this very concept as being an important step towards generating nationwide debate and its conclusions helping government to take a decision, action on the same. It is not a traditional field for women slowly getting occupied by more and more number but still women police officer experiences glass ceiling after a certain stage. The need to have the basic inclination, capacity building as well as social backing to be a successful and impression making officer in their career Mahila police Thana or role of women in police futuristic important challenges in front of the security domain in government.

Introduction was followed by the **first presentation** given by **Dr. Sucharita Gadre** on the research done by Jpip on **'The impact of covid-19 on the mental health of women officers in police and government of Maharashtra State'**. This project was conducted in association with MKSSS Siddhivinayk Mahila Mahavidyalay Pune. The first speaker talked about the findings revealed through intensive fieldwork comprising interviews with 154 administrative officers and 200 police officers in Pune and Aurangabad. In all 354 police and government women officers were included in the study. It was seen that these officer experienced a highly stressed work and family environment during Covid. Also they were exposed to some gender discrimination while distributing responsibilities on one hand. They had to face the citizens who wear also confused and were feeling helpless due to the health challenges. However some of them tried to use positive coping strategies like exercising, one to one communication, hobbies, taking consultation from seniors and counsellors while some adopted negative strategies like loneliness, irritability sometimes addictions. It was seen that the government officers used positive coping strategies more prominently as compared to the police officers. However the working hours for police officers were much higher during Covid period.

The second speaker in the session was **Dwarakatai Walgude** member of Mahila Dakshata Samiti from rural Pune captured the attention of the audience. Dwarakatai who is an active volunteer of Jnana Prabodhini and who works in the vigilance committee at Velhe, Dwarakatai Walgude, narrated her experience about victimized women in the rural society. She could not get education after 4th standard. Because of her work in the microfinance self- help group she developed confidence and volunteer as Dakshata Samiti member to help women facing domestic or other violence incidences. As many police stations in rural area do not have a lady officer Dakshata Samiti members have important role to play. She mentioned that many times they are called to register the case and seek their help in the legal matters as a support system. Such members also have to visit the court in role of Sakshidar. She also narrated some interesting and important cases where her contribution could help the woman get justice. She told about how they also tried to console and trigger compromise in the family with the help of police so that families do not get separated. She insisted on having at least 50% of the police officer as lady officer in each police thana. The third speaker, **Deepa Vairagkar**, an activist of Paud Road Samvadini visited Palasia Mahila Police Station in Indore. The purpose of this study was to determine the benefits of such a police station for women. She elaborative described the structure and functioning of that Thana. She had interviewed the Thana head who was known for her firmness and discipline around the Thana. She gave an account of how the Mahila Police Thana has triggered confidence in women to report the case alone which was not seen earlier. Also cases of sexual molestation which were hardly reported by women are now being reported without any fear she mention that the police officers in this Thana also need to take training regarding communication skills and basic counselling. While answering to the question about the striking difference such Thana shows, she said that safety and security of women is considered as the most important. The police officer gave a lot of importance to

counselling and helping families from getting shattered. They also run **sessions on good touch and bad touch for children in the local buses** which were a very striking feature. A lot of follow-up of the cases gives concrete help to needy in form of skill building, earning while the case is in the court, free bus pass ect. so that they are not left helpless. It was mentioned that the police officers truly empathized with the victim and make them feel secure even for reporting or staying at the police Thana without any family member to accompany.

Dr Sudha Kothari as a chairperson gave her closing comments. She mentioned that role of Dakshata Samiti and women police officers needs to go hand in hand. Counselling centres at police stations can contribute a lot in making women feel safe consoled. She mentioned her experience of such Thana in Chhattisgarh and appealed the government to have a churning on this topic in reference to the implementation nationwide as a policy.

2nd Session- 'Facilitating gender sensitization among police personnel at all levels.'

Smt. Anjali Railkar compared this session by coating one experience in gender sensitization workshops conducted for police.

At first a recorded speech given by Mr. Nikhil Pingle (S.P., Gondia) was shown on the topic of gender sensitivity in the police force. Because of his sudden transfer he could not physically attend the session however his video was used in a clear and crystallized manner. He said that police have to face mostly the negative happenings in the society because of which such reflections are deep soon in their minds this can lead to some sort of insensitivity towards women. He mentioned that there are many factors responsible behind these phenomena. Every geographical place has its own subcultures and psychological mind sets as well some places women are quite confident about their safety. While at some places they may not feel safe even in daylight. Police force needs to cater all such needs while talking about women. In the system, he mentioned that the police should understand the feminine needs of their women overcuts. This condition is like a doctor suffering through a disease and at the same time treating the patient who is in the same condition. The government has the number of provisions but the male officers need to take decisions by keeping their conscience alive. He specially mentioned the need to save attitude of young men right from school and college so that later their sensitivity gets reflected in whatever occupation they embrace.

Followed by Mr Pingle, Hon. Pravin Dixit Sir (Director General of Police, Retd) addressed the audience.

He took an extensive review of the whole issue of gender discrimination in with reference to police system emphasized on the 112 India app developed by government of India which can be used to offer safety help for women anywhere anytime. He mentioned that the reflection of the society itself is seen in systems like police or government. Mahila Police Thana should not be a question of debate. Their importance is beyond what we have. There is a policy of 33% reservation for women in police but it has not come to reality due to the sheer unavailability of competent and eligible young women who could fill those posts. So shaping the physical and mental capacities of young girls, motivating them to join police force is the prerequisite for making such provisions workable right now. He mentioned that there is a need to establish training centres for women who can prepare them for becoming eligible to pass the police service eligibility tests. There are no hard and fast structure requirements for Mahila Police Thana except 100% recruited women officers. However making the provision of minimum 1 police officer in each police thana workable and 100% functional is the first need. He mentioned the number of women officers who have done exemplary work. He emphasized the need to have more such women officers. As per Mr. Dixit there is no question of confusion regarding the hierarchy in police system where any officer irrespective of

gender can instruct the subordinates, assign them task. Assuring the victims about justice and safety is one more challenge. He said after registering the complaints many times women give up due to number of hurdles. In the way they may dissolve the complaint or make few compromises. Due to social pressure, the police needs to stay behind such victims family and take them to the actual case hearing. **So commented on how effective counselling can take place at the police stations the behavioural manners and sensitive response factors can be developed through training the police force consistently.** He also described the concept of police Mitra and how citizens can become a part of the police system by contributing to the cause positively.

Hon. Sudhatai Kothari (Founder member of Chaitanya Women's Association) concluded the session. She talked about how women in self-help group changed the way they think about communicating with the police person. She said that such empowered women can make police personnel believe that they can take help from such women to smooth their jobs. She emphasized on the coordination of various departments like Police, Women and child welfare, Health for making safety and security systems more efficient and long lasting for women. She said that networking has no alternative.

There was a lunch break after the second session. Many participants took the opportunity to communicate with the dignitaries and discuss with them certain queries raised during earlier sessions.

3rd Session – Seminar- ‘Mahila Police Thane = Mahila Security: Imagination and Reality’

The third main segment of the seminar titled, ‘Mahila Police Thana = Mahila Security: Imagination and Reality’ was led by highly experienced and eminent speakers, including retired Director General of Police, Makarand Ranade, Adv. Asunta Pardhe (Social activist) , Adv. Sushil Atre (Criminal lawyer), and Senior Journalist Mangesh Kolpakar of Sakal Group. Ms. Gauri Kapre, lead person of Stree Shakti Prabodhan group at Jnana Prabodhini compared this session.

In her opening comments she presented the results of a Google survey conducted by the organiser covering various aspects of the topic ‘**Awareness regarding Mahila Police Thana in common people.**’ The survey indicated that 52% respondents were completely ignorant about concept of Mahila Police Thana. Around 67% did not know about where the first such Thana was established and only 48% respondents believed that Mahila Police Thana will contribute in overall reduction in crime percentage. They agreed that such separate Mahila Police Thana should be there because women will feel more safe and secure at such places. It was mentioned that 83% believed that such Police Thana would be able to handle given delinquencies in a better manner. However not more than 50% feel there will be reduction in corruption only because of Mahila Police Thana.

The panellists discussed in detail about the need and efficiency regarding such separate establishments. The panel said that even though such Police Thana are established, they are not substitute to women officers working with the same wheel to be deputed in each police thana so that the access and solution to women victims are not compromised.

Mr. Makrand Ranade talked about the **Shakti law** brought by Andhra government and the establishment of Disha Police Thana at Kurukshetra. The women victims of violence according to him in such Police Thana will have senior lady officer who will take proper cognizance of the issues and they will get enough powers to work on them.

Adv. Asunta Pardhe based on her experience as a social activist and lawyer emphasized the need of having basic documentation of various types while registering the FIR. Even at the existing police stations she said that if there are separate Mahila Police Thanas, there is a

possibility that female will be diverted and they will not get proper attention at the general Police Thana. Many times women are not assisted properly while registering their complaints. She said that women's issues are tackled in a piece meal manner. The complaint is taken orally which hinders the proper prosecution and actual court hearing process for getting justice. She felt that rather than separate police station with all women officers, they should be made more sensitive and competent to address the issues of violence against women. She gave number of details about how minor procedures done rightly at right times can help the victim in facilitating the justice process.

Mr. Ranade added that In the Mahila Police Thana women officers should be given experience to handle all types of crimes and not necessarily only those limited to violence against women.

Adv. Atre contributed his observations as a lawyer. He gave a different perspective to the issue saying that it may not be always the case that the woman is a victim in every such incidence. There have been number of cases where the accused also is a woman as example in dowry cases or 49 8A cases. So one also needs to think about victims as well as women who are accused of committing that violence. He also mentioned that there can be vested interests of women who registered complaints of domestic violence which needs to be scrutinized very objectively. He suggested certain procedural corrective methods for reducing the tempering with evidences. He said that it is impractical to keep women officers at every segment or junction related to the justice giving procedure because such number of women officers is not practically available. He said that instead of male police officers, women officers also should be given recognition and backing for their effective handling of cases against victims.

Senior journalist Mangesh Kolapkar talked about the role of media can facilitate in the functioning of police system to give better justice in such cases. He also emphasized the need to take more number of eligible women police personnel to bridge in the present gap. All the panellists emphasized on the role of immediate counselling not only to the victims but also to the potential criminals and other members of the society. It was suggested that just as the victims can have their own lawyer, the accused also should have the right to have private lawyer so that proper justice is done.

Everybody mentioned that a firm implementation of law up to proper conviction is definitely needed to create proper image of police force. The moment of goose bumps occurred during this lively and impactful discussion.

4th Session- Experience sharing by Ms. Purnima Gaikwad, IPS.

In the last concluding session, the audience got an opportunity to listen to Smt. Purnima Gaikwad, S.P., Hingoli. 'Dignity and suffering of women in police force' was the theme of her experience sharing.

She mentioned that women have the basic empathy and compassion to make the government more pro-social. However if the police is given the training to develop these abilities with no compromise on assertion of law, it will be more useful. She mentioned that a woman officer has to literally give 200% commitment and establish herself as authority. Women officers also have to deal with life and death situations just like other officers at such moments following your rational mind and conscience helps in taking appropriate decisions. She mentioned that before establishing separate women police stations the routine police stations should be made more women friendly right from the infrastructure to the communication systems. Lot of changes are required to be made immediately. She mentioned about some practical difficulties. Women officers face difficulties while balancing their career and

personal life. However based on some of her own experiences she said that commitment to cause and finding once Life goal in the work can help a woman officer to function at her best.

All the sessions where followed by a short question answer round in which some of the points mentioned in the narration were covered properly.

The one-day seminar, Women Police Station: Achievements and Challenges hosted by Jnana Prabodhini and led by distinguished and eminent personalities was not only unique and thought-provoking but was also an eye-opener for the 165 people who witnessed the event.