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## **Women Police: Employment Status and Issues of Concern in Nagaon and Golaghat District of Assam.**

*Ayousree Dowara  
Dr Karabi Konch*

### **Abstract**

Police is the civil force of a state, responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of public order. It is the official organization that is responsible for protecting people and property, making people obey the law, finding out about and solving crime, and arresting people who have committed a crime. Women police refers to women who is a member of the police force. As the aim of the police force is to promote the welfare of society, it is constantly engaged in creating the conditions in which people can live and pursue their own affairs without interference from thoughtless individuals. The rights of every member in society are protected by the courts through the agency of the police force. Dedicated to the service of society, police personnel are prepared to work under any conditions to protect a person, sometimes even at the risk of losing their own lives. Police departments must foster diversity, inclusion, and equality of opportunity for all within their ranks. In India, women comprise nearly half the population, but are poorly represented in the police across most state. This study is an occasion to understand the situation of women in policing in Assam. In this paper attempt has been made to discuss the representation of women in police force in Assam with reference to women police in Nagaon and Golaghat districts and some of the issues and challenges confronted by them.

**Key Words:** Women Police, Policies, Issues and Challenges, Employment Status

### **Introduction**

India, like any other developing country, faces diverse challenges due to its geographical dimension, multi-lingual, multicultural and multi-ethnic character. India is also home to almost all the religions of the world and in the present scenario when religious fundamentalism is growing and complicating the problem of the governance, it poses challenges on the agencies that are entrusted with the task of maintenance of law and order.

The police force plays a vital role in the maintenance of law and order in society. The idea of a police force has been conceived centuries ago, when lawless acts were committed everywhere; but it was only in the nineteenth century that steps were taken to build up a strong police force in almost every country. The establishment of the police force, however, has changed the state of affairs in society. As the aim of the police force is to promote the welfare of society, it is constantly engaged in creating the conditions in which people can live and pursue their own affairs without interference from thoughtless individuals. The rights of every member in society are protected by the courts through the agency of the police force, which is therefore a source of inspiration and hope to all law-abiding citizens. Dedicated to the service of society, police personnel are prepared to work under any conditions to protect a person, sometimes even at the risk of losing their own lives.

Police departments must foster diversity, inclusion, and equality of opportunity for all within their ranks. In India, women comprise nearly half the population, but are poorly represented in the police across most states. (Borah, R.R. and A. Hazarika, 2016)

The objectives of the study are to understand the general organizational structure of the police force and to examine the women’s representation in the police force in Nagaon and Golaghat district of Assam.

**Methodology**

In this study, both primary and secondary data are collected. The primary data were collected through the field visit to the Office of the Superintendent of Police, Police Reserve Office and police stations of Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam.

The sources of secondary data are collected from books, journals, theses and concerned websites.

This study was carried in Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam. A descriptive research design with descriptive method and tabulation have been used to analyse the data for the study. This is micro study and therefore conclusions drawn cannot be universal. The study is confined to women police in Nagaon and Golaghat District of Assam.

**Structure of the Police Force**

The state police forces are supervised by centrally-appointed officers belonging to the Indian Police Service, an All India Service which is recruited, trained and managed by the central government. These officers occupy the ranks of Deputy/Superintendent of Police and above and are responsible for overall supervision and management of policing functions within their stipulated jurisdictions. Police positions that are filled by state governments include upper subordinate ranks (Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, and Assistant Sub-Inspectors) who work generally at the police station level and do much of the crime investigation work, and the police constables which consists of the bulk, i.e., almost 88% of police strength and carry out tasks like patrolling, guard duties, and public order duties. The head of the police force is the Director General of Police who is responsible to the state government for administration of the police force. (Prasad, D. 2016)

**Table 1: The Ranking Structure of the Indian Police**

Levels	Designations
1	Director General of Police (IPS)
	Additional Director General of Police (IPS)
	Inspector General of Police (IPS)
	Deputy Inspector General of Police (IPS)
	Superintendent of Police (IPS)
	Additional Superintendent of Police (IPS)
	Assistant Superintendent of Police (IPS)
2	Deputy Superintendent of Police (SPS)
3	Circle Officer (SPS)
	Inspector
4	Assistant Sub – Inspector
	Head Constable
5	Constable

The above table shows the ranking structure of the Indian police from top to bottom in the states and union territories. Indian Police Service (IPS) are recruited and trained at an All India level. State Police Service (SPS) are recruited and trained at the state level. From level 2 to 4 the police personnel are recruited and trained at the state level. It is possible for the SPS officers to be promoted to IPS, till the rank on Inspector General of Police. Level 3 officers can rise to the rank of Level 2-Deputy Superintendent of Police. In metropolitan cities the post of Commissioner of Police exists, equivalent to Assistant Director General of Police or Inspector General of Police in a larger metropolis.

Assam is divided into 34 police districts and 1 Commissionerate.

For further specialization of police work, the Assam Police has 16 branches: 1) Assam Police Radio Organisation, 2) Battalions, 3) Police Commissionerate, 4) Criminal Investigation Department, 5) Village Defence Organisation, 6) Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, 7) Assam Police Housing Corporation Ltd, 8) River Police, 9) The Bureau of Investigation (EO), 10) Border, 11) Special Task Force, 12) Railway Police, 13) Special Branch, 14) Fire and Emergency, 15) Chief Minister’s Special Vigilance Cell, and 16) Training and Armed Forces.

The Assam Police is further divided into Armed Branches. Each police district has an Armed Police Reserve unit functioning under the direction of the District Superintendent of Police, which is the armed wing of the district police to “deal with an emergent law and order problem or any violent situation in the district, and for providing security guards or escort of violent prisoners, or such other duties as may be prescribed”.<sup>1</sup>

There are also Armed Police Battalions across the state, “to be deployed under specific orders of the Director General of Police, to aid and assist the civil police in dealing with virulent and widespread problems of public disorder or other forms of violence, needing deployment of armed police beyond the resources of the District Police”.<sup>2</sup>

There are some differences in the rank nomenclature of the battalions. A commandant, equivalent in rank to Superintendent of Police, shall head each Armed Police Battalion. The commandant shall be assisted by a Deputy Commandant, equivalent in rank to Additional Superintendent of Police, who will be the Second-in-commandant of the Battalion. Each Battalion shall be divided into an appropriate number of Service Companies and a Headquarters Company, each of which will be headed by an Assistant Commandant, equivalent in rank to Deputy Superintendent of Police.<sup>3</sup>

The traditional but increasingly outdated view of policing as “man’s work”<sup>4</sup> is built on a patriarchal model of policing that views the work as physical, authoritative, forceful, dangerous, and hence inherently unsuitable to the so-called female physique and temperament. These powerful stereotypes persist, despite evidence to the contrary that strongly indicates not just the suitability of women to policing, but also the positive contribution they make.

### **National Level Policies for Women Police**

Due to the increased attention on women’s safety in recent years, the Government of India has taken several initiatives emphasising the need for states including Assam to increase the number of women in their police forces. Key among these are:

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs in 2009 proposed 33 percent reservation for women police with the aim of improving the responsiveness of the law and order machinery in dealing with crimes against women and recommended each police station to have at least three women sub-inspectors and ten women police constables to ensure women help-desks are staffed at all times.
2. In 2016, Ministry of Home Affairs, proposed creating Investigative Units for Crimes against Women (IUCAW) at police stations in crime-prone districts across states. The planned 200 units comprising 15 personnel each will be equipped with specialised investigators dealing primarily with crimes against women and at least five of them will be women. The Ministry has laid down that a total of six IUCAWs are to be set up in Assam.
3. Modernisation of State Police Force Scheme: The State Action Plans for the year 2014–2015 under the Modernization of State Police Force Scheme to include
  - A provision for toilet facilities with adequate water supply, proper lighting and ventilation for women personnel at every police station, outpost and barracks
  - Provision for portable toilets wherever needed
  - A clean, secure rest room with proper ventilation and storage facilities for women police in each police station.

4. National Conferences for Women in Police (organized by Bureau of Police Research and Development in collaboration with states):
  - a. Recruitment, Training and Posting (with a focus on conflict zones)
  - b. Integration and Harmony (Work-Life balance)
    - Budget for work-life harmony fund with 5 years commitment for appropriate training programmes.
    - 100% accommodation for women constabulary level.
    - Mandatory weekly offs.
  - c. Creating Gender sensitive work infrastructure and equipment.
    - Facilities like portable toilets for traffic duties and sanitary pad dispensers
    - Research to be commissioned on gender related health issues
    - Stationery duties at the early stage of the motherhood and at the crucial years of children’s education.
    - Children Care and Maternity Leave as per Central Government.
    - Policy of couple posting to be strictly implemented.
    - Separate tribunal to prosecute sexual harassment cases.

### **State Level Policies for Women Police**

There are a number of state-level laws, policies and initiatives which directly impact women police in Assam. Please note this is not an exhaustive list of all the initiatives which have been piloted and established.

1. **The Assam Women (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 2005**<sup>5</sup>: This Act provides reservations for women in government services and posts, including all offices of the state government, public sector undertakings, educational institutes, industries, businesses, and/or occupations, owned, controlled, managed, or aided by the state government. The only exception is for posts in the Assam Judicial Service. (Grade I) The Assam Police is thereby bound to reserve vacancies for women under this Act. Section 4 of the Act provides for 30 percent reservation for women against vacancies in all services and posts to be filled up by direct recruitment.
2. **Veerangana Unit**: A special unit within the Assam Police with a specific mandate to police crimes against women, called the Veerangana unit, was established in November 2012. It was created in the aftermath of the widely publicised molestation case on 9 July 2012 in which a gang of men brutally molested a 21-year-old girl outside a pub, in full public view, for over 40 minutes. Notably, the Veerangana unit is not mandated to conduct investigation, but rather, to take action on the spot.
3. **All Women Police Station Guwahati**: There is one more police-led initiative to respond to crimes against women established in Guwahati – the All Women Police Station Guwahati. Established as far back as 1993, the all women police station was established in the office and premises of the Panbazar Police Station and was to draw its all-women staff from

among the women police in Assam. (Borah, R.R. and A. Hazarika, 2016)

4. **Assam Vision Document 2016-2025:** The election manifesto (Assam Vision Document 2016-2025) of the current ruling party in Assam, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), contained notable policy promises towards women's empowerment. Several of these pertain directly to women in policing. These are:

- Reserving 35 percent seats for women in all government services of Assam
- constructing women police stations in every district of Assam
- Ensuring sufficient female police personnel in every police station and district, etc.

#### The Numbers and Representation of Women Police in Assam

As on 1/1/2017, according to the annual statistics published by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), the total strength of police in Assam stood at 55,403, with actual strength of women police comprising of only 3,033 i.e., 5.47% in state police. Unfortunately, Assam ranked one of the lowest in India in terms of representation of women in its police at just about 2.16%.

**Table 2: Number of Police in India and Assam**

	Actual strength of police (AB+UB)	Actual strength of women police (AB+UB)	Percentage of women police in state.	Percentage of women police in total. (INDIA)
ASSAM	55,403	3,033	5.47	2.16
INDIA	1,926,247	140,184	7.28	7.28

Source: Chapter 12 (Women In Police) of Data on Police Organisations (BPR&D)

Data from the Bureau of Police Research and Development has revealed that women account for only 7.28% of all police personnel. At the top, the numbers are even more dismal, with less than 1% of senior positions being occupied by women. Even as the rate of crimes against women has increased in the past few years, the glaring lack of women police personnel raises important questions not just about effective policing but also about the place of women in society.

**Table 3: Number of women police in Nagaon and Golaghat Districts of Assam**

	Actual strength of police (AB+UB)	Actual strength of women police(AB+UB)	%of women police in district.
GOLAGHAT	621	72	11.59
NAGAON	1,284	145	11.29

Source: Official data from Police Reserve office of Nagaon and Golaghat.

#### Golaghat District Profile

The name "Golaghat" originated during the mid-part of 20th century from the shops established by the 'Marwari' businessman at the bank of river Dhansiri near present Golaghat Town. The word "gola" means shops and "ghat" means the landing areas of ships and ferry in the river. It is now an administrative district which got its status as district in the year 1987. The geographical area of Golaghat district is 3502.00 Sq. Km with a total Population of 1,066,888 according to 2011 Census. There are a total of 4 sub divisions with 6 circles. There are 12 police stations in Golaghat district with 4 assembly constituencies.

**Table 4: Statement of the Police Force of Golaghat**

Sl. no.	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1.	S.P.	1	1	0
2.	Addl. S.P.	1	1	0
3.	Dy.S.P.	3	2	1

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Golaghat on 10/05/2018

**Table 5: Statement of Un-Armed Staff of Golaghat**

Sl. no	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1.	Inspector	6	6	0
2.	Sub-inspector	39	38	1
3.	ASI	42	42	0
4.	Head constable	31	31	0
5.	Naik	8	8	0
6.	Constable	320	259	61
7.	TOTAL	446	384	62

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Golaghat on 10/05/2018

**Table 6: Statement of Armed Staff of Golaghat**

Sl. no.	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1.	ABI	1	1	0
2.	ABSI	3	3	0
3.	HAVILDAR	9	9	0
4.	NAIK	3	3	0
5.	LANCE NAIK	6	6	0
6.	CONSTABLE	151	141	10
7.	DRIVER CONSTABLE	2	2	0
8.	TOTAL	175	165	10

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Golaghat on 10/05/2018

As on 10/5/2018, according to the data collected from the Police Reserve office, in Golaghat district of Assam, the actual strength of police is 621 both armed and unarmed branch and out of which the women police consist of only 71 i.e., 0.13% of total police in Assam and 11.59% of police force in the district.

### Nagaon District Profile

Nagaon, is the birth place of the Vaishnavite reformer Srimanta Sankardeva, who brought about a resurrection to the people of Assam. It is an old district which formed by the old British administrators. Nagaon is located in the very heartland of Assam which falls directly at the centre of the entire northeast of India. The geographical area of Nagaon district is 3993 Sq. Km. according to 2011 census the total population of Nagaon District is 2,823,768. There are 10 circles and 2 subdivisions. The total of Police Stations in Nagaon district is 22 and there are 11 assembly constituencies in the whole of Nagaon district.

**Table 7: Statement of the Police Force of Nagaon**

Sl. no.	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1	S.P.	1	1	0
2	Addl. S.P.	2	2	0
3	Dy. S.P.	5	4	1

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Nagaon on 21/05/2018

**Table 8: Statement of Un-Armed Staff of Nagaon**

Sl. no.	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1	Inspector	6	6	0
2	Sub-inspector	86	84	2
3	ASI	79	78	1
4	Head constable	88	88	0
5	Naik	39	39	0
6	Constable	582	478	104
	TOTAL	880	773	107

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Nagaon on 21/05/2018

**Table 9: Statement of Armed Staff of Nagaon**

Sl. no.	Categories of post	Actual strength	Men	Women
1	ABI	1	1	0
2	ABSI	7	7	0
3	HAVILDAR	36	36	0
4	NAIK	11	11	0
5.	LANCE NAIK	8	8	0
6	CONSTABLE	311	273	38
7	DRIVER CONSTABLE	30	30	0
8	TOTAL	404	366	38

Source: Official Data Collected from Police Reserve, Nagaon on 21/05/2018

As on 21/5/2018, according to the data collected from the Police Reserve office, in Nagaon district of Assam, the actual strength of police is 1284 both armed and unarmed branch and out of which the women police consist of only 145 i.e., 0.26% of total police in Assam and 11.29% of police force in the district. There are a total of 22 police stations and outposts in the district and it is one of the police district of Assam.

### Issues of Concern

The representation of women in the police force is very less not only in Assam but throughout the country. The centre as well as the state are doing their best by providing opportunities for women empowerment. The priority issues of concern that lay out some of the systemic hurdles and challenges that women police face are:

1. The Centre has set the benchmark of 33% representation of women in the police department. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to increase women's representation in the Assam Police department and proper recruitment is required to achieve the target.
2. The working hours for the women police needs to be fixed so that the factors like managing household duties, taking care of children etc should be considered with allocating duties to them.
3. The working conditions needs to be improved and every police station should be provided with proper toilet, rest room, sanitary dispenser and other basic necessities needs to be improved.
4. The State and the Central government should take up necessary steps to increase participation of women in the police department. Proper advertisement and publicity should be given for the post of women police to attract candidates for different levels.

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5. A regular training program should be given to the women police personnel to develop their skills and cope up with different situations.
  6. Enough opportunities should be given to women police personnel to reach upper subordinate ranks like Sub-Inspector and Inspectors.

These are not an exhaustive list but touches on some of the major issues concerning women police.

### Conclusion

The nature of police system is altogether different from work in the other departments such as banks, schools, hospitals, or business organization. The police work demands to work more hours, to work at late night and to work in dangerous and uncongenial places. Such a situation poses many problems for women police. It is very important to make India's Police Force more welcoming for women. The women police are also poorly represented in the state. Studies carried on this issue have found that women police officers are kept away from core police functions and are given inconsequential jobs which are confined to desk job and investigation of cases of dowry, harassment and rape. The police force needs to include more women to make policing more effective.

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