Name

Prof.

Anthropology in 21st Century

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**Silenced Lives: The Active Role of Women in Indian Military**

After almost 75 years of independence from British Raj, the Indian administration in starting of 2020 agreed on giving women the officer cadet position in armed forces, the law passed:

On 17 February 2020, the Supreme Court of India passed a landmark verdict that allowed women officers in the armed forces to be granted a permanent commission (PC) and command postings in all branches of the army. Elaborating on the judgement, the Bench argued that ‘all terms of appointments of women officers shall be the same as their male counter- parts’ (Supreme Court Judgement 2020). (Chakravortty, 2021, p. 63)

This recent shift in law and order appeals the better and inclusive future, however, the question remains on traditional outlook of positioning women in certain light which has been wired so tightly in our society, law and politics. It emerges from questioning of viability and capability of the women to be at the front line and borders of the country. It is a symbolism of the ever existing gender inequality within our nationhood. Chakravortty in her study on *Changing Trends in Gender Practices of The Indian Military* (2021) further writes that this law passed by rejecting “appeals against the ruling, which were being made by highlighting the psychological limitations in women officers to hold command positions” (p. 63). This outlook of women seen in certain way, “a weak gender” shapes the fabrics of social and cultural structures, most of which is visible in Indian societies today. To address this judgement which was long due, and the associated gender structural beliefs, this paper attempts to do an analysis of the role of women in Indian military from the time wherein their impact on India’s national security has been undocumented and silenced. Historically, during the Indian National Movement of independence, women had an active participation stepping in the field to protect and fight for freedom. The exceptional women rulers’ and their tales “were seen as a deviation from the national narrative of independence that emphasised more on masculinity as valour” (Hildebrand, 2016). This ignorance prolongs till date.

Looking at the post-independence historical landscape, there has been participation and support of women (armed or local) in some of major Indian wars. The prejudice and discrimination exists in acknowledging, first, involvement of women as military personnel, and second, the wide support and bravery at the areas nearby nation borders or war-areas. A 2021 Bollywood movie *Bhuj: The Pride of India* illustrates this deviation where role of women has been largely ignored from national narrative. There were 300 women who took part in Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, constructing a bridge for the ease of soldier movement. The media discourses, however, glorifies only the masculine as heroism.

**References**

Chakravortty, D. (2021). Changing trends in gender practices of the Indian military. *Facets of India’s Security*, 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003200291-6/>

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